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EDITOR'S LETTER



PHOTO BY RIO BLAKE

Money makes the world go round. In Viper's ninth issue, we explore the theme of Getting Money. What does it mean to you? For me, I'm caught in a double standard. I want to earn enough to launch initiatives and charities to improve the lives of others. But on the flip side, I'd be lying if I said I don't have a dream to cop the baby pink Lambo Countach so I can pull up and stunt.

Growing up without money forces you to be resourceful but can also leave you fiending for funds. In the words of the poet Nasir Jones, "When she not around, I'm heated, 'bout to lay somethin' flat. Know how to treat it, never take for granted, she got me trapped." There are probably more rap songs about money than there are about women and weed combined. That's really saying something. A quick genius search tells us that there are literally thousands of songs with Money in the title alone, by everyone from Madvillain to Tyga. However you refer to yours; cash, loot, lizzies, scrilla, readies, cheese, bread, mula, it's bound to mean something to you.

Even if you don't like money and what it represents, it's essential for human survival. Crafting dreams is difficult without it. This issue we explore a group of artists killing it in their respective fields and explore what getting money means to them. From 21 Savage launching an initiative to teach kids in schools how to manage their finances, to Trippie Redd selling out overseas shows in 11 minutes at the tender age of 18. We speak to MiST, who's made money independently, investing it in some of the most adventurous music videos UK rap's ever seen; plus slowthai, Northampton's rebellious but cute MC, making money with his team and cultivating incredible songs D.I.Y-style.

We also explore issues around money laundering, the legacy of Master P, and how Booker T. Washington's Atlanta Compromise is still in effect in the music industry today. Costa Rica translates to "rich coast" so we headed there for a fashion editorial, before dipping back to London to catch up with Chynna, Jeshi and Lola, not to mention Trillary Banks and some IG Girls #IRL. Following that we're serving up some profiles with brands killing it right now; PAQ, Jamie Backshall, Unknown and What We Wear. Some incredible creatives are featured in this issue, Filfury knows all about getting money, having created J Hus' 'Common Sense' album cover. And Miggy who's crafting an incredible career as a video director, having started out shooting 'The Plug' for Rich The Kid.

Big Narstie is one of the funniest humans on the planet so it's an honour to feature him in The Questions! Likewise, it's so special to have Kwes Darko, Sango and Steel Banglez as our trio of producers profiled in this issue. Florida's Mobsquad Nard runs a bails bond company on the side of his impressive rap career so we caught up with him to find out how he juggles things. We also spoke to UK artists Cas Jones and Trillary Banks.

Special shout out to Ray's Corrupted Mind for so many photos in this issue but mostly the one of Metro Boomin! He filled us in on the behind the scenes stories to some of his images. BROCKHAMPTON's photographer Ashlan Grey curated this issue's Vinstagram, with some of his personal favourite photos he's taken. And Ill Jill and Patrick Waugh created a beautiful pair of artworks for us. Love to Charlie Sarsfield who was recently in Kenya and Rwanda and captured some beautiful images that we've published in a photo essay, alongside an interview with him.

Money provides freedom and imprisonment. Money can make you beautiful and ugly. Money can be your making and your downfall. On that note, let's get into the issue. Enjoy!

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Celiya Koster
Writer, Miggy Jasper

What does "getting money" mean to you?
To me getting money is about making something from nothing. It's about having a hustler mentality and finding opportunities for yourself. It means I am exceeding expectations.

What's your materialistic goal - what item do you wanna buy when you've made it?
I am gonna go big and say a modern, spacious, designer furnished house.

Duncan Telford
Photographer, Trippie Redd

What does "getting money" mean to you?
Probably less than it ought to. I do enjoy getting paid though.

What's your materialistic goal - what item do you wanna buy when you've made it?
My biggest goal was have an apiary producing honey from bees that feed only on spliff pollen. Unfortunately they're not keen on the taste and the solution is to have the hives in the middle of a five mile radius field of spliff so that the bees would have nothing else to eat. That much weed would be like heaven, but I'd feel bad about making bees eat stuff they don't like. So my materialistic goal remains something I'm yet to work out.

Bardha Krasniqi
Photographer, #IRL

What does "getting money" mean to you?
My materialistic goal is to have my own coffee shop/warehouse. I would love to provide a space I always looked for when I was younger; a space where people can think of new ideas, be inspired and meet new people who have similar interest to them.

What's your materialistic goal?
A private Jet because I love to travel and this would be perfect for me. Living in luxury with my favourite people, hahaha! However I would need to know someone who can fly a plane!

Dylan Aroloye
Writer, Trippie Redd + MiST

What does "getting money" mean to you?
That's actually a pretty difficult question but I'd say "getting money" to me means hustling and grinding to not only survive, but live well.

What's your materialistic goal?
My materialistic goals tie into my goals in general. I'm going to be a very successful entrepreneur and have a huge impact on the entertainment industry. I have a rough "materialistic figure" in my head but I can't reveal that till my first book comes out. I'm also going to buy my mum a Range Rover and myself a Mercedes G Wagon.

Fenna Lang
Art Director, Costa Rica

What does "getting money" mean to you?
For me, getting money means to make a living doing what I love, with great people around me and good vibes. Without thinking about what others want or expect me to do, but just being genuinely happy and making my own shmoney.

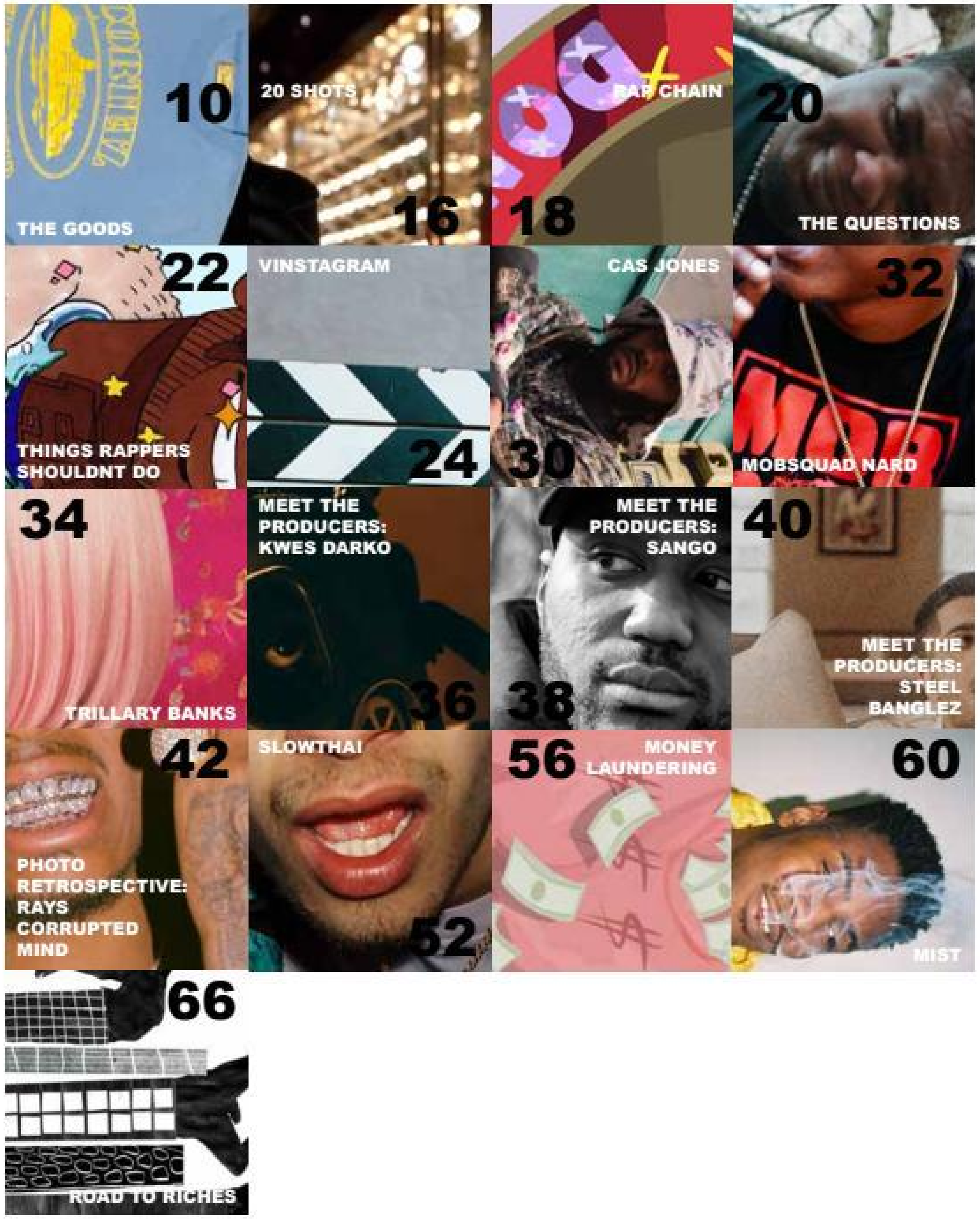
What's your materialistic goal?
Once I "make it" I want to get myself a silver BMW E30 - that's my materialistic goal.

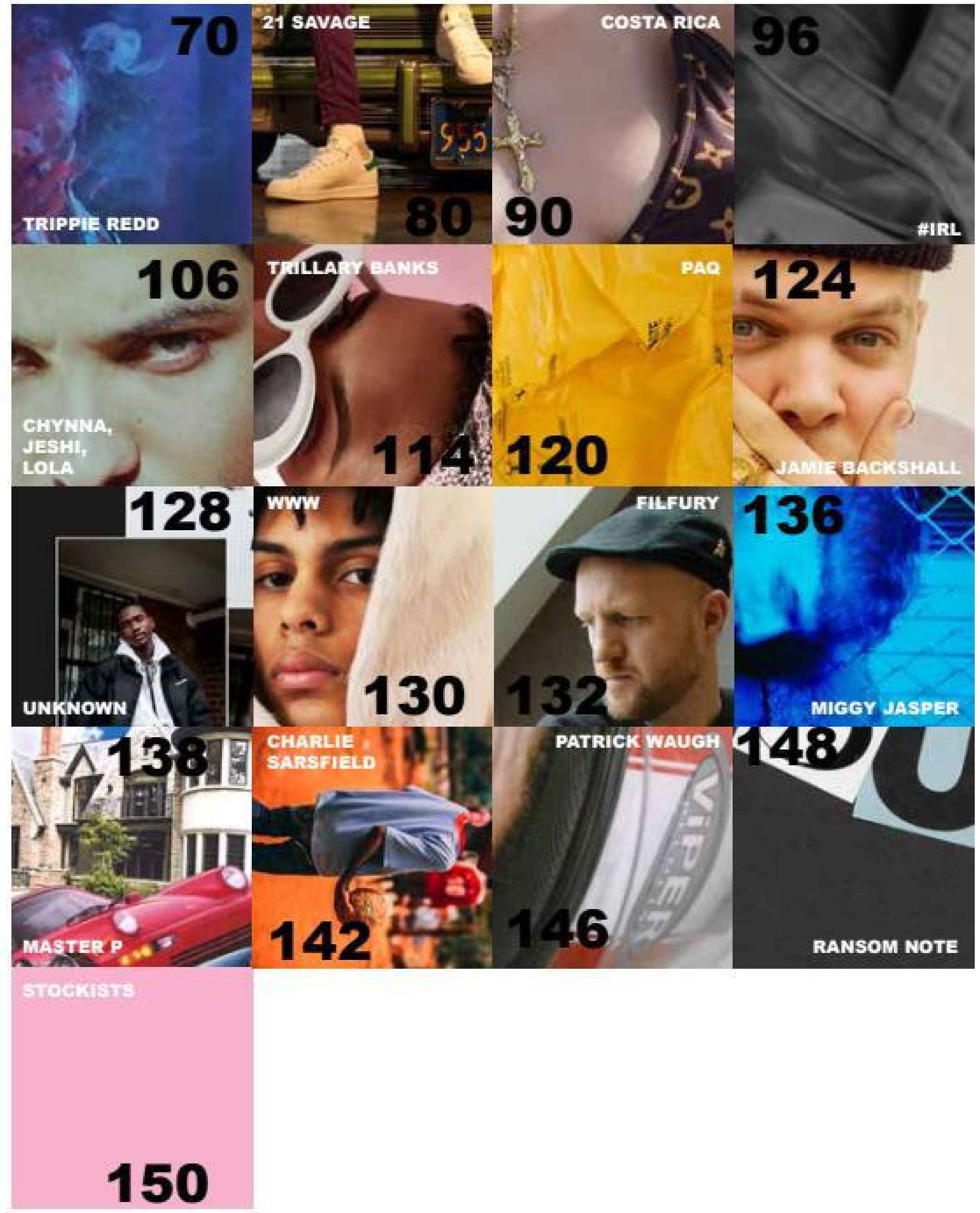
Charlie Sarsfield
Photographer, Kenya + Rwanda

What does "getting money" mean to you?
If I'm being honest, money is just the thing that allows me to do the things I want to. So I suppose getting money isn't the main goal, it's more the experiences money allows me to have; going to places I've never seen and buying film to document those experiences.

What's your materialistic goal? What item do you wanna buy when you've made it?
Family is important to me, I just wanna make sure my little sister and brother are good. If I'm lucky enough to have a family of my own then I'd rather buy them the materialistic objects they want. As long as I have my cameras I don't need for much, seeing other people smile makes me happy, so buying for others is my goal.

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THE GOODS





1

PALMER BALLISTIC BLACK POUCH

The UK based, utility workwear brand have created the ultimate accessory. This handcrafted holster with removable pouches ensures that users have a compartment for all small essentials. The ballistic black pouch is set with adjustable straps catering for owners of all sizes. Featuring a penholder, retractable Palmer pokey, small pockets, two fragrance pouches, gum pocket and card pocket, it's safe to say your essentials will be safe as houses. Made from black waterproof canvas cotton this product is the epitome of strength and safety.



3

BILLIONAIRE BOYS CLUB REPEAT PRINT JUNGLE SHIRT

It's highly fitting that Billionaire Boys Club appear in the 'Get Money' issue. This botanical print shirt does not shy away from the repeat patterns synonymous with the streetwear brand. The intensity of the jungle kingdom is replicated through the graphic collage. With heavy BBC branding repeated over the jacket, it's made from 100% cotton, and with four front pockets, this shirt is a highly desired piece from this year's spring collection.

2

COMME DES GARCON HOMME LOGO POCKET TEE

Japanese brand Comme Des Garcons have taken things back to basics with this simple logo pocket tee. Sticking to their signature aesthetic, the brand have created a short sleeve T-shirt made from 100% cotton. The colourful logo in its sans serif font borders the bottom of the front side of t-shirt while a patch pocket on the chest adds a nice design feature. The ribbed crew neckline adds subtle detail that make the design simple but stylish.



4

CORTEIZ ALCATRAZ JUMPER

Formerly the habitat for some of the world's most dangerous criminals, Alcatraz prison is the inspiration behind this season's Corteiz collection. The complementary colours within this sweatshirt design create a spring summer aesthetic perfectly suited for British summertime, you know those days that aren't really hot but aren't cold enough for a coat. The yellow hue acts as an outline for all graphics from the Alcatraz illustration to the 'Rules the World' slogan that underlines this powerful and bold graphic.



5

PATTA SCRIPT LOGO SLIDES

Summer is slowly approaching - emphasis on the slowly for U.K readers - and slider season is in sight. After getting some insight into Patta and their humble beginnings from the Barely Legal issue we continue to follow the Dutch brand and their money moves. Our friends at Patta have blessed us with another modest design creating some simple black sliders with the logo beautifully coated in white. The sliders are also available in the reverse colour way. Made from high quality PU the creation of this contrast radiates style and comfort.





6

PAX 2 VAPORIZER

Remember when it was just papers or blunts? As times are changing, with advances in technology aiding the future of innovative vape design. For years Pax have been pushing a portable vaporizer crafted in a modern and simplistic shell designed for the use of dry herb material. It's a little pricey but this low profile device comes with a 10 year limited warranty, charger, mouthpieces and maintenance kit. The vaporizer can be purchased from Pax retailers and local vape shops and currently comes in two colour ways.

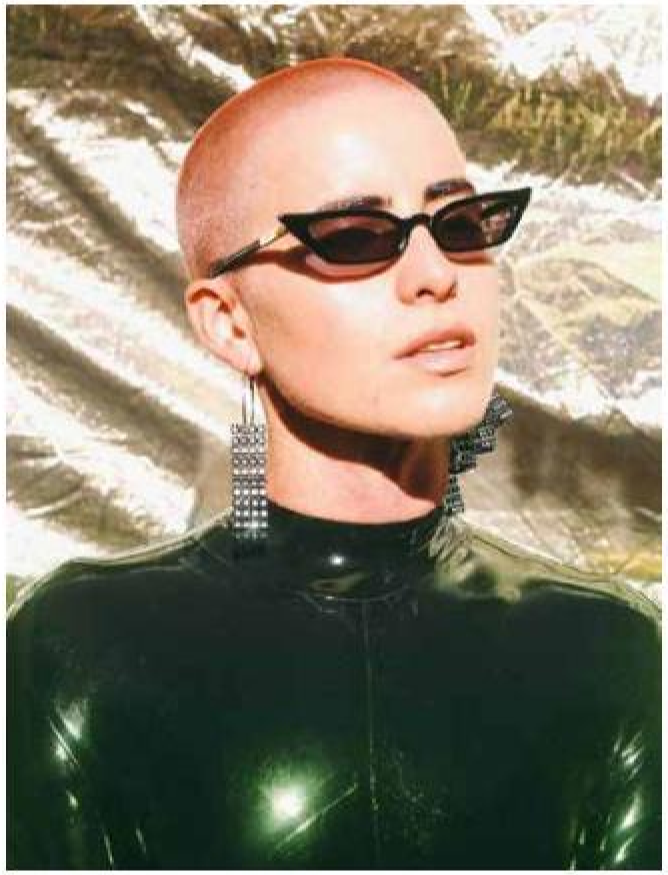
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PLANET i SUNGLASSES

Eye candy is becoming a wardrobe staple here at Viper, what with all those late nights trying to meet deadlines! Not to mention that it's very important to protect your eyes whilst catching some rays. Planet I have created some extra-terrestrial accessories to spice up a flashy aesthetic. Not solely limited to the designs in this issue, the brand are shifting their way into new sights creating a multitude of shapes and sizes to suit an array of customers.









8

POPPY LISSIMAN SUNGLASSES

Australian born designer, Poppy Lissiman has created a stunning range of sunglasses giving us directional focus to hotter climates. Poppy created her first collection of sunglasses in 2015, after initially starting her label in 2008 and creating her first stand alone store three years later. Going solid for three years now, the designs are handmade and beautiful quality.

9

BEATS PILL +

There's no doubt about the importance music is in life. Whether you're listening to Trippie Redd or the infectious Trap melodies of 21 Savage, the Beats Pill + ensures that you're able to carry your wireless speaker with you in all its portable greatness. Currently in five colour ways the speaker has a maximum of 12 hours battery life so your never have to leave quietly. Taking just three hours to charge, this accessory also allows you to power up your phone or another external music device from this intelligent piece of technology. The discreet size of this device can be highly deceptive with the two-way crossover systems allowing for an impressive range.



10

NAPAPIJIRI AROY PACKABLE 2 IN 1 JACKET

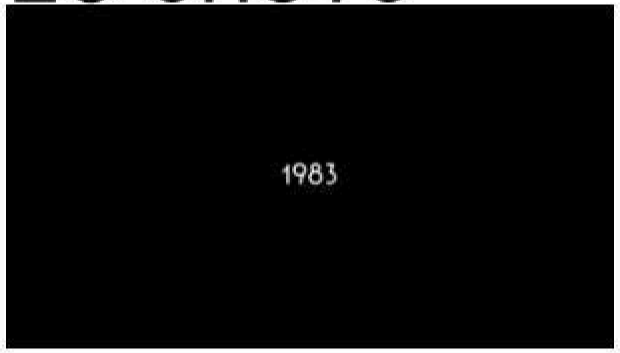
The Norwegian brand have been creating innovative design for years and a recent collection created by British designer Martine Rose has pushed their recent range back into the spotlight. It goes without saying that function is instinctive for the brand. The Aroy packable 2 in 1 jacket has been crafted with a technical exterior. Formed with the use breathable, waterproof scuba style fabric, pieced with reflective grid details the jacket also transforms into a vest with the removable of detachable sleeves.

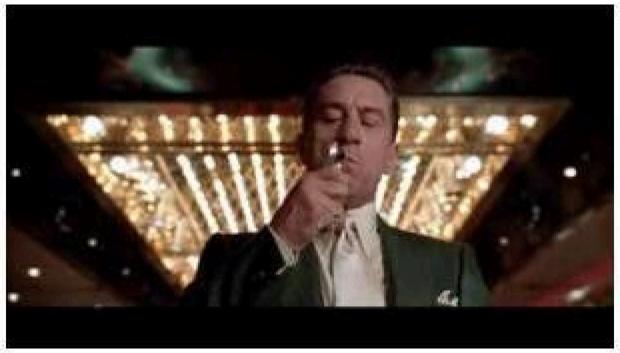
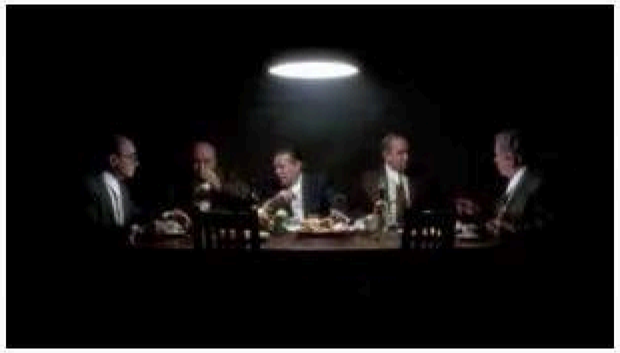


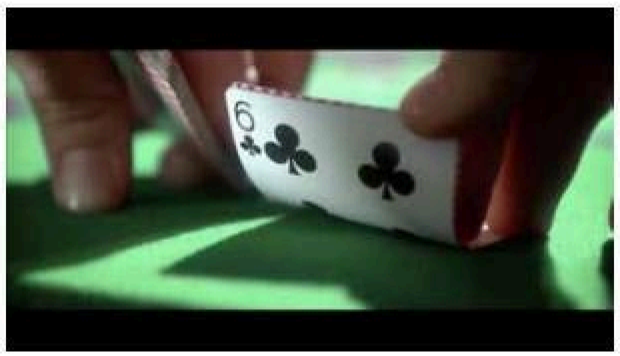
20 SHOTS

ONE CULT FILM
20 ICONIC SCENES

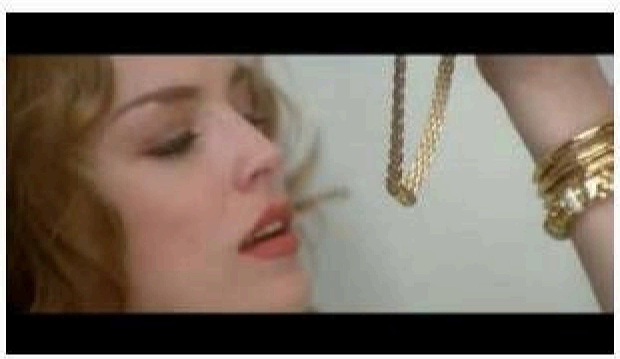
CASINO,1995
MARTIN SCORSESE









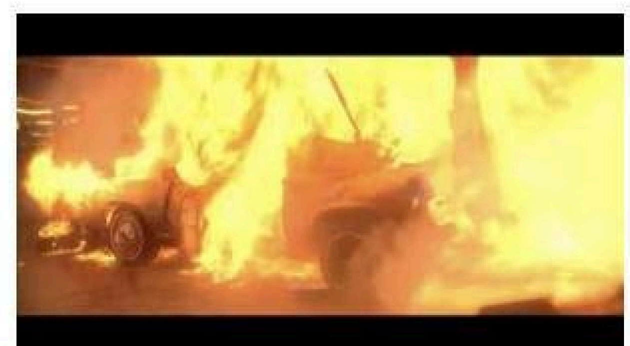












RAP CHAIN:
NIPSEY HUSSLE'S FUCK DONALD TRUMP CHAIN

ILLUSTRATION BY LUCAS SANTOS
WORDS BY TAVIS KEL

WE ALL KNOW AN ICED OUT CHAIN IS ESSENTIAL ON ONE'S QUEST TO BECOME A RAPPER, BUT WHAT DO YOU PICK? AN ICED-OUT CHOKER CHAIN? A JESUS PIECE? A MINIATURE VERSION OF YOURSELF MADE OUT OF DIAMONDS? (WE SEE YOU QUAVO!) NO, THEY'VE ALL BEEN DONE BEFORE. WHAT SUBTLY SAYS, "I HAVE DEPTH AND I CARE ABOUT HUMANITY" WITH A SIDE OF POLITICAL AWARENESS? I KNOW, A CHAIN BEARING THE SLOGAN, "FUCK DONALD TRUMP."

To be fair, this isn't the first time Nipsey Hussle's said F DT. By now you're sure to have heard his 2016 hit with YG, taken from the latter's 'Still Brazy' album.

Released prior to the election, the song saw both LA artists openly criticise the Republican candidate, saying the term "Fuck Donald Trump" no less than eight times in the hook alone. On the song Nipsey states, "I thought all that Donald Trump bullshit was a joke." Fast forward two years and his latest piece of jewellery is no joke.

Yeah it doesn't exactly scream 'I'm getting money', but who said your jewels can't reflect your political stance. Nipsey's not alone, Teyana Taylor also engraved her distaste for Donald in gold bearing the same phrase, "Fuck Donald Trump." Someone needs to hit Ben Baller for an Obama Jesus piece!

Now I don't know how I'd feel about anything Trump-related resting on my chest, but at least it says fuck 'im! Donald Trump winning the election has to be one of the biggest punchlines in American history, but sadly the joke never ended. Our laughter has since dulled and our cheeks hurt but the joke hasn't ended and so we politely grimace, to keep up appearances.

Despite his triumph against Hilary Clinton, he's had the lowest presidential approval rating in 70 years. DO YOU REMEMBER HOW BAD THE BUSH YEARS WERE? For those that remember Bush' reign, it's hard not to see Trump's win as the most surreal and confusing moment in U.S. politics.

And though we've definitely never imagined laser beams shooting out of our eyes, reducing him to a singed toupee atop some Cheetos dust, we do wonder, when will it all end? It's gotta be before the four years are up. We need Kanye to get out of the sunken place and give us another honest moment like when he said, "George Bush doesn't care about Black people" on live TV.

Now this guy will forever be just 'Donald Trump', you won't catch me placing President before his name. I'm content knowing I was a resident of California during the Obama years; damn, that was a good time! In the immortal words of YG, "fuck Donald Trump."

"THOUGH WE'VE DEFINITELY NEVER IMAGINED LASER BEAMS SHOOTING OUT OF OUR EYES, REDUCING HIM TO A SINGED TOUPEE ATOP SOME CHEETOS DUST, WE DO WONDER, WHEN WILL IT END?"





THE QUESTIONS: BIG NARSTIE

PHOTO BY THE NATURALIST

What do you smell like right now?
I smell like Super Orange Glue, BDL NSG, Lady Sativa, gang gang gang gang, mixed with a bit of Givenchy. Givenchy and ganjas, you know them ones there; them deeper fragrances.

How would your last partner sum you up in 3 words?
Fucking scum bag.

What's the most troublesome thing you did as a child?
I got a lot of beatings because I was a fucked up yute. I had a wild imagination and what I thought of in my head, I just did, so that equals a lot of beatings. I come from a Jamaican background, "spare the rod, spoil the child" rude boy, you know them church beatings when you cry and wake up powered? Cry yourself to sleep and wake up energised.

Who's the weirdest celebrity you ever had a crush on?
Boom, Susanna Reid. The woman on Good Morning, I think she's like 50 or something but she's buff.

Ever punched a stranger?
Standard, bare times.

What's your most embarrassing fear?
Shitting myself on stage like Dennis Brown.

What sound do you hate?
"Police, pull over."

Which character trait of yours do you hope your child doesn't inherit?
My love of danger.

What's your favourite sea creature?
I used to rate Jaws but them China man been eating them man there, that took away his street cred. Jaws been moving paro' now cuz, them China man cook them man there. Rah, I need to be something like a killer Octopus or some shit.

The worst thing about drugs is...
Depends what you're talking about because if we're talking about Ganjas, we're not talking about drugs because I don't know anyone that wants to sell their TV for a bag of weed, you get what I mean? We have to clarify what we're talking about because if we're talking about hardcore drugs, what you saying like Pete Doherty-style and that. You know them Kate Moss ones, where the middle part of your nose drops out and them tings there, you get what I mean? Now you're talking intergalactic stuff and I'll just say HADOKEN to your lifestyle, you know them ones there, cuz. I think ganja's great but it should just be in responsible hands, I think people smoking ganjas should be of legal age and should be responsible with it, i.e. you shouldn't be giving it to kids and stuff like that. On its medicinal purposes of helping people, I'm straight with it. Rastafari stands alone.

"I SMELL LIKE SUPER ORANGE GLUE, BDL NSG, LADY SATIVA, GANG GANG GANG GANG, MIXED WITH A BIT OF GIVENCHY"



THINGS RAPPERS SHOULDN'T DO:

LET INCARCERATION STOP THE HUSTLE.

ILLUSTRATION BY LUCAS SANTOS
WORDS BY CHRIS MENDEZ

IN DECEMBER 2013, GUCCI MANE WAS CHARGED WITH YET ANOTHER FELONY CHARGE. BY THIS TIME GUCCI, BORN RADRIC DELANTIC DAVIS, HAD BEEN IN AND OUT OF THE JUDICIAL SYSTEM MORE THAN 10 TIMES. THIS WASN'T NEW. THE THOUSANDS OF FREE GUCCI TWEETS AND T-SHIRTS WEREN'T NEW EITHER BUT THIS FELT DIFFERENT. IT FELT SCARIER AND REALER, MORE EVIDENT. IT FELT LIKE THE ATLANTA ESCAPE ARTIST WE ALL KNEW AND LOVED MIGHT BE LOCKED AWAY FOR GOOD.

Gucci fans were used to it - he got into so much trouble in the 2000's and 2010's that people stopped asking about the charges. "Oh, the time he threw a girl out of a moving Hummer - was it for that?"or "Was it for the time he killed Jeezy's mans for trying to rob him? Was he even charged for that?" This time however, the question was, "Is Gucci Mane done for good this time?"

The only way to answer that question is to use a conspiracy theory created by someone who probably looks up to DJ Akademiks; it's the most interesting aspect of Gucci's historic rehabilitation and rise: The Clone Theory. On that sad Winter day in 2013, Gucci's fans waved temporary goodbyes to a man that had reached his rock bottom. He was in deathly shape; from both substance abuse and poor diet. Guwop barely made sense when he spoke and some would say (me, but don't @ me), it reflected in his music. Fast forward three years, a freshly released Gucci Mane looked like a new man; fit, coherent and sober. He looked unbelievable, so much so that people didn't believe it. When actual conspiracy videos on YouTube are made about how you look so rehabilitated that you must be a clone, you've definitely done good.

He was back and he wasn't only a better person, but a better artist and brand. During his nearly-three year bid in prison, Gucci wrote thousands of hours worth of lyrics - and the best part? Prior to that, HE HAD NEVER WRITTEN LYRICS. That's right! Gucci Mane fucking freestyled 'So Icy', 'Lemonade' and 'Mouth Full Of Golds' off the top of the dome! And if starting to write lyrics wasn't enough, shortly after his release from prison, Gucci would release a best selling autobiography. Elvis never did that.

Prison was also a financial wake up call for Gucci. In 2014, he reportedly made a whopping 1.4 million dollars; like while in jail! Gucci Mane made more money locked up than a non-incarcerated Shad Moss! Just a few short months of freedom is all Gucci needed to become the poster boy for comebacks. While incarcerated, his work ethic made dollars and kept fans hungry for more material. Gucci avoided making the mistake so many incarcerated rappers before him made; he never stopped working on his craft while inside.
Although the genre is rooted in comeback stories, Gucci's tale is hands down the best in the history of rap. Unless DMX becomes a vegan veterinarian, this is it. Radric Davis is the Robert Downey Jr. of rap - and Gucci Mane is Iron Man.

Or Iron Mane, if you will.

"IN 2014, GUCCI MADE MORE MONEY LOCKED UP THAN A NON-INCARCERATED SHAD MOSS"

VINSTAGRAM with Ashlan Grey



"ONE OF MY FAVOURITE PICTURES BECAUSE IT'S PERFECT"



"THE STARTING POINT. I'LL NEVER GET THOSE DAYS BACK"



"ONE OF THE FIRST PHOTOS I TOOK ON MY T4. SOMEWHERE NEAR FAIRFAX"



"HOME"



"THAT'S HOW IT FEELS SOMETIMES YA KNOW? A BUNCH OF TOY SOLDIERS IN FRONT OF A WINDOW"



"IT NEVER FELT LIKE TIME LOST"



"RED COROLLA"



"AWARENESS"



"FLEETING"

CAS JONES

PHOTO BY ABBY KENNY
WORDS BY VICTOR DAVIES

SOUTH LONDON'S CAS JONES IS NOT PLAYING AROUND THIS YEAR. WITH THE RELEASE OF THE VISUALS FOR THE HEAD-BANGING DROP, 'BE EASY' PRODUCED BY MICHELIN SHIN, HE HAS OFFICIALLY ANNOUNCED HIMSELF AS ONE TO LOOK OUT FOR IN 2018. HE'S GONE FROM SHOWCASING HIS TALENTS ON TRACKS SPORADICALLY TO FULLY DEDICATING HIMSELF TO HIS CRAFT. NOW READY TO TAKE OVER THE WORLD WITH THE LIPHERS CLUB – A COLLECTIVE OF MUSIC AND FASHION CREATIVES WHO TOGETHER PRODUCE SOME OF THE MOST INNOVATIVE FASHION AND HARD-HITTING LYRICS – WE MEET CAS...

Who is Cas Jones?
Hold up, I've got to jump out of my own body real quick. Cas Jones is a rapper from South London who talks about other people's stories as well as his own. I talk about emotions that can't really be put into sentences or spoken directly. The lyrics I write have to sit on a song to capture the full emotion, all my songs are like diary chapters; personal memoirs.

Tell us something about Sutton we don't know.
It's bigger than a high street. There are so many sub-pockets of Sutton. All of the maddest shit I've ever seen has been in Sutton. The shit people glorify in their respective hoods, I've seen all of that on ends. People think that's because it's on the edge of Greater London it's not as bad as the other areas. But it is. It's close to Epsom, Kingston, Caterham but literally down the road is Tooting, Mitcham and Brixton.

What was your first introduction to music?
Honestly, my parents were my first introduction to music. My mum used to play hella Motown, my dad loved Luther Vandross and Jill Scott and he would run that shit all the time, he is a man of Soul. But my uncle was the person who made me understand modern music. He brought me into the new-school, new-age music, both my uncle and my aunts. Then you go to school and start hearing other stuff and get shown what everyone else likes, then you can pick up or leave what you like, now we here.

What is the Liphers club and how did you get involved in the movement?
Liphers Club initially started up as – and still is – a brand called, 'I Live Liph' started by Franc and Mark Lipher. I got involved in 2010, maybe about four or five years after it started, created a sub-brand called "The Liphers Club" and now we run 'I Live Liph' as well as the Liphers Club. Liphers Club is more for the outlandish shit, that's the gang, our code of conduct and 'I Live Liph' is more for the professional, business side of things. Our motto is "Join At Free Will," but you will learn in time.

Describe your relationship with Ashley Verse and the work you create together.
Who? I don't even like that guy! Haha no, that's my brother and we've been putting in the shift since doors opened. Everything we do is very organic, we just go at it. That's my bloodline, you feel me. We're family man. we all bounce off each other. Ash would have an idea, I'll have an idea, Franc will have a next idea, we put it together and flip it. Go back-and-forth with ideas to create a super mad ting, we just vibe on some deeper shit.

You maintain a close relationship with artists such JGRREY and Manga, but do you prefer to work with artists you know personally, or are you open to working with anyone?
I'm open to working with anyone as long as there's an organic relationship. People like JGRREY I've known for many, many years, although it may seem like we've known each other for five minutes. I actually haven't known Manga for very long, but it feels like I've known him forever and how we met was very organic. I don't work off how long I've known you, but more our relationship, and even how we met. If we're making music together, I've got to be able to vouch for you in any circumstance in life. Facts.

Which artists or people in music influence you the most?
I actually tweeted something along those lines literally yesterday. I said something like, "I can happily say 70% of the music I love is made by people I know and respect." I don't want to state names as I want people to be able to find their music organically as opposed to just playing their shit because I co-signed it, but my friends influence me the most. That's the music I really fuck with, something I can connect to. Even if I don't know you and I fuck with your lifestyle, morals and shit, I kind of get to know you through your music.

'Be Easy' is one of hardest songs released in the UK this year. Explain the creative process of making the track.
It was crazy! Heard the beat and thought, "this is fire." Not gonna lie, I sat on the beat for about two or three days. After three days I went back to the studio and for some reason, it played it again out of nowhere; the beat got to me. I then started recording around 8.30pm and left when it was light, about 7.20am or some shit. In terms of writing it, it didn't take very long, It was more about, "how can I secure this bounce?" I wanted to keep it stripped back and bare but still saying as much as possible – I wanted to have some fun with it if I'm being honest, my previous music is much deeper. The lyrics are barely bars, they just happen to rhyme if I'm honest. They're almost like bullet points of my life, little key moments.

You once said if you never got into music, you'd try model or acting. Where do you draw your influence in fashion from?
To be honest I don't know so I couldn't tell you! Might sound a little cliche, but probably my environment. I can draw influence from anyone, take a piece here and there and see how I can put them together. Then I look at the colours and see what works well with what. To be honest, on a day-to-day, I'ma keep it 100, I'm more time in a tracksuit. But there will be some very rare pieces mixed up in there, you feel me.

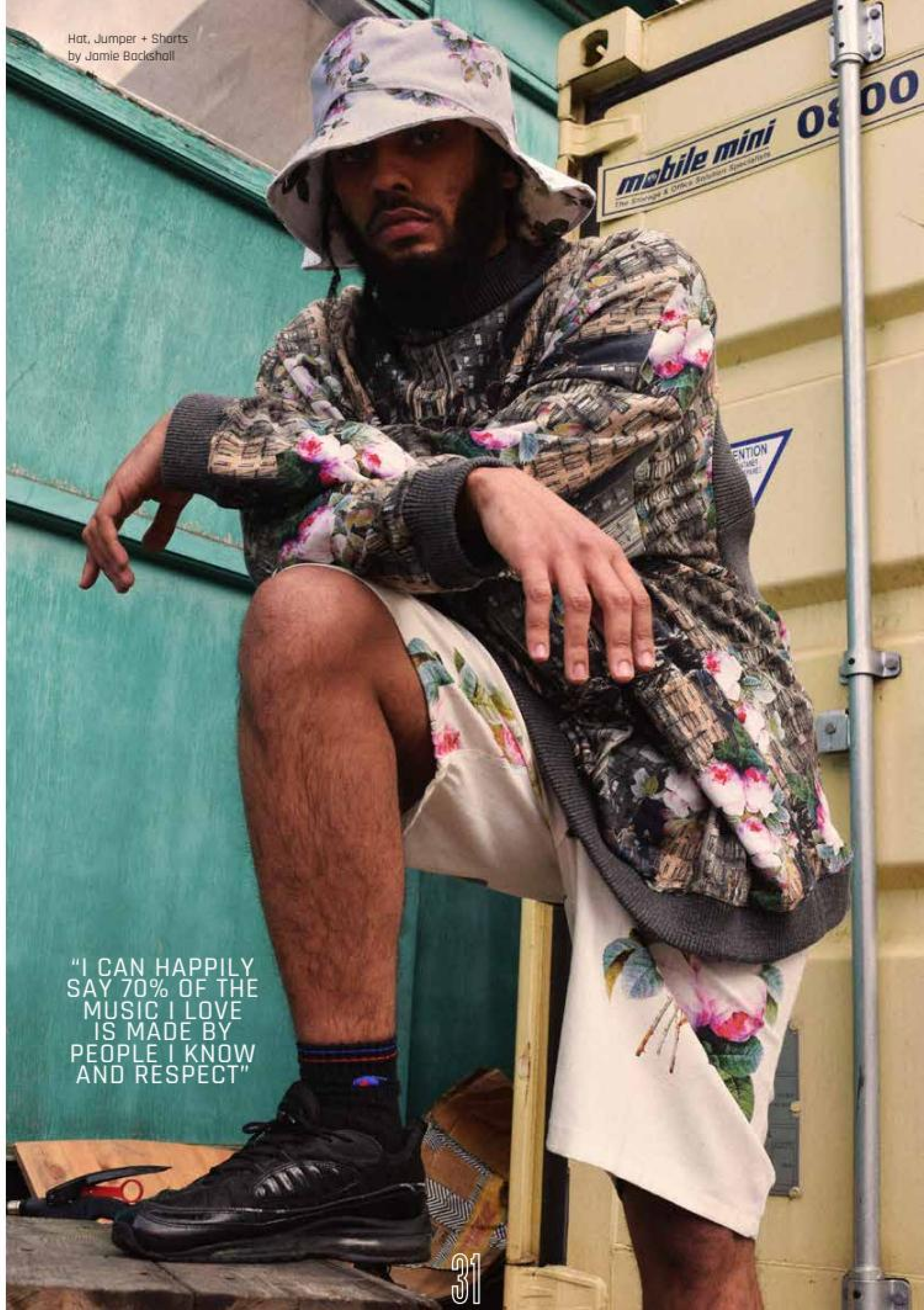
What's your greatest achievement?
This is the part where everyone says 'my child' or some shit but I don't have any, so I'd say staying alive in this fucked up world. FACTS.

Name three artists that you'd love to work with.
I hate this question fam! But I'll go for Benny Mails, Shaun Sky and Miraa May.

What more can we expect from Cas Jones this year?
A bag of fuckery. An absolute madness because I'm not stopping. I used to be that guy who would drop music and live life and then come back to music. But all I do right now is make music that is my Liph. And everything else – merch, videos, art... everything.

Last words?
Big up Lily Mercer. Big Up Viper Mag. Ground up business. Liphers To The Mu'Fuckin World. Gang shit only.

@CasJonesLDN
soundcloud.com/casjonesldn



Hat, Jumper + Shorts
by Jamie Backshall

"I CAN HAPPILY SAY 70% OF THE MUSIC I LOVE IS MADE BY PEOPLE I KNOW AND RESPECT"



MOBSQUAD NARD

PHOTO BY SAM CONANT
WORDS BY GIOVANNA MAE

WITH REALITY RAPS REFLECTING THE HARSH ENVIRONMENT GROWING UP IN THE DUVAL COUNTY, MOBSQUAD NARD HAS BEEN COMPARED TO BOOSIE BADAZZ. IN 2017, NARD OFFERED A TASTE OF REALITY WITH A 12-TRACK PROJECT TITLED 'NARDO DAVINCI', FEATURING THE LIKES OF BOOSIE AND FELLOW MOB SQUAD MEMBERS, MOBSQUAD LIL TEE AND MOBSQUAD SNAP SOSA.

ALONGSIDE PURSUING A RAP CAREER, THE JACKSONVILLE RAPPER RUNS HIS OWN BAIL BONDS COMPANY. WITH COLLABORATIVE PROJECTS AND NEW MUSIC ON THE WAY, NARD IS DETERMINED TO BUILD HIS BRAND SO THAT ONE DAY HE'LL BE WORTH HIS WEIGHT IN GOLD.

Describe your sound.
I feel like my sound is Duval, it's the south period. I've got a real southern sound - my accent, how I act, it's all southern. Everything about me is the South. If it's somebody from the south they can relate it's just that southern sound that the people love.

What was it like growing up in Jacksonville?
I miss those days, just growing up going to the roller dome and to football games. It was a lot different from today, we got computers and all of that. Back in the day we used to be outside, off the porch.

How would your friends sum you up in three words?
In three words they gon' say I'm driven, they gon' say I'm late because I'm always late - especially when I'm dealing with people I don't know. It's just I got my own specific time that I'm going to be there. So they definitely gon' say late. They gon' say sharp.

When it's time to get a new set of grills what type of gold do you go for?
I be going for straight slugs, straight 14 or straight 10. I have a jeweller, B Fit. I either go straight slugs or gold and diamonds. I got the whole front flooded out right now.

Tell me three things that you can't live without.
Music, I can't live without music. I gotta have that music. My fam, I can't go without my fam and I'ma say...I wanna say I can't live without weed but I'm on probation right now so I gotta live without it...uh I really wanna say weed. When you say live without, you talking about forever?

Yes forever, what can't you live without forever?
Ok I can't live without weed; I can't live without my fam and music.

Alongside being an artist you run a bails bond company, what's the story behind that?
It's how we eat, it's the fam you know we put it together in 2008. You know cause when you get locked up, you don't see that DOC no more you're on your own. If you think about it, that's how many people get locked up in a year. That's how many people done got locked up so far this year. So when you think of that, dang that's forty three hundred and something. You think about it like, hmmm it's just numbers. But it's a number thing if you think about how many people get locked up. How many people gon' spend money with you in order to get out for their freedom? It just become us being necessary for people to get back out to their families.

When you're in the studio what do you do or need to get in your creative zone?
I just need a vibe you know what I'm saying, just for inspiration. I could just look and see something on TV and start rapping. All I need is a vibe. I don't really need a lot; I don't need drugs or none of that. I wrote a lot of my newer project whilst I was locked up so it's just an inspiration some real shit to talk about. Not saying I don't be loaded in the studio and that because I do. A lot of the time when I'm in the studio I like to drink, I like to vibe out.

What track on your latest project 'Nardo Davinci' did you enjoy making the most?
Dang that's a hard one, I swear because I recorded that shit all over LA to the East. A lot of the songs in New York, I had a good time making the sound of the whole CD. Charlotte, I had a ball, I swear I can't pick. I looked at that question 100 times, like damn I thought long and hard I really couldn't pick. I had a ball everywhere just making the whole that's why I love the CD so much, it's just the experience. It was a hell of an experience getting it done, getting everything taken care of... I enjoyed it.

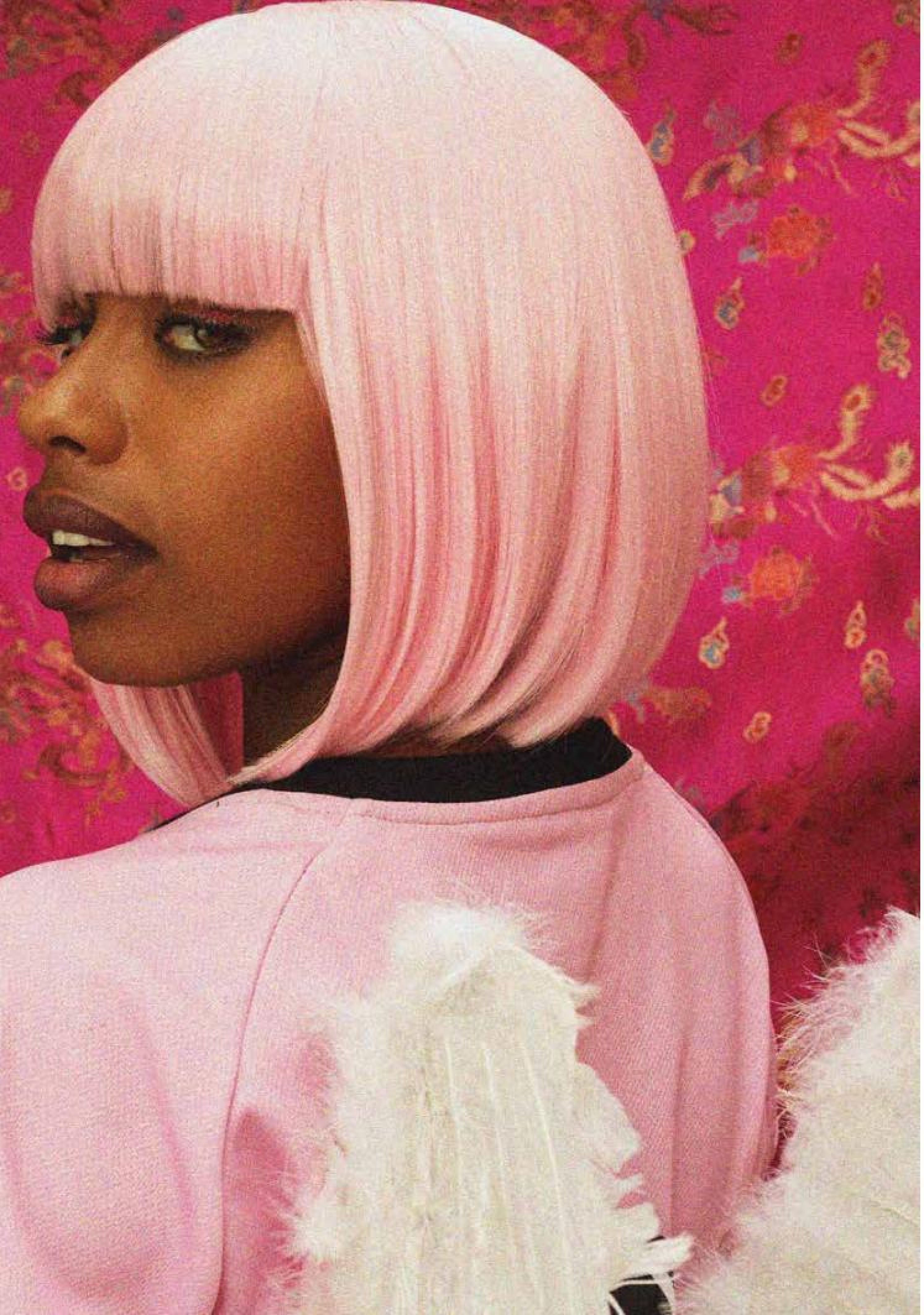
My favourite song was 'Peephole'...
'Peephole', it's your favourite one? I had a ball recording that one... that was recorded at my spot.

What's next for MOBSQUAD Nard?
I got 'Life's like a dice game' on the way. Me and Starlito we're gonna drop a joint, a collaborative tape. It's straight gas too, we were out in Houston recording this past weekend. Then I got a solo project I'm working on as well. I'm working on everything, dropping videos from 'Nardo Davinci' and everything. Steady grinding hard.

When it's all said and done what do you want to be able to say you accomplished as a hip hop artist?
I just wanna be able to let the folks know I held it down, you know what I'm saying. When I came in, I kept it all the way solid. Music that I'm doing right now, people are comparing it to a lot of the people that been doing this. So you know I should be proud, proud to get my music compared to. At the end of the day I just want people to recognise the truth because I sit down, I put a lot into my music. I see a lot of people who pop a tab or pop a Xan and go in there and [record]. I don't necessarily make music like that, I go in there and I put a lot behind me because I want it to last for so long. I don't want it to be just like a summer song or like a five minute song like a lot of these people music be. I want my music to last a long time for real, that's why I put my effort and all of that behind it. At the end of the day I want people to recognise that.

@mobsquadnard
mobsquadnard.com

"I SEE A LOT OF PEOPLE WHO POP A TAB OR A XAN AND GO IN THERE AND [RECORD]. I DON'T NECESSARILY MAKE MUSIC LIKE THAT, I GO IN THERE AND I PUT A LOT BEHIND ME BECAUSE I WANT IT TO LAST FOR SO LONG"



TRILLARY BANKS

PHOTO BY EVE POWER
WORDS BY BETH MARSHALL

WITH A NAME LITERALLY SOUNDING LIKE MONEY, TRILLARY BANKS IS HERE TO MAKE IT RAIN. INFLUENCED BY HER JAMAICAN HERITAGE, TRILLARY BANKS IS ONE OF LEICESTER'S BRIGHTEST MUSICIANS. SHE'S MAKING NOISE FROM LONDON TO KINGSTON, GET TO KNOW HER BEFORE SHE BLOWS...

Your stage name is a flip of the original WCW, Hilary Banks from The Fresh Prince of Bel Air . Do you share many similarities or personality traits?
I don't share many similarities with her, I'd like to believe we both have a cool sense of style. I'm motivated by money and so was she, but who isn't?

Your lyric, 'Money affi run when we link up, if you take care of the kitty everything good' is a great motto. What qualities do you look for in a man?
Fun, handsome, honest, kind-hearted, humble, good-spirited. It's not all about money, though at the same time I need to be with someone who's really motivated and heading towards goals. I want somebody who is on the same page as me at the end of the day. A person needs depth too, money is just a bonus.

Hailing from Leicester, what aspects of the city do you think influenced you and your choice of career?
Highfields aka Deuce is where I grew up and gained life experience, that's where nearly all the Caribbean people were situated and where the so-called 'ghetto' was in Leicester, so I grew up around all of that. Being from Leicester, you can't name anyone who's really broken out from the city through music recently, which means the underdog mentality is so strong and I've had to go harder to ensure I break the cycle.

Da Brat recently announced the stage-adaptation of classic 'Get Money' film, Set It Off, featuring Letoya Luckett and Kyla Pratt. Who would your Set It Off crew be and why?
Trillary Banks: the British baddie
Young M.A.: the OG
Cardi B: the crazy one
Kashdoll: the hood/sexy one

You definitely seem to have found your signature flair in your lyrical content and visuals. How would you describe your individual style?
Thank you! I'm growing as an artist, I have done many styles and I'm just out here having fun with it. I grew up with a mad melting pot of musical influences like hip hop, reggae, dancehall and RnB. I just mix them all together with my Jamaican heritage and boom. I've had to pave my own way into the music industry and I'm going to do everything my way.

In your sultry flip of LL Cool J's 'Doin It' you said, "Only trill women in my section, big big money when I'm flexin!" Do you have a close-knit crew of females around you? How do you motivate each other to get to this cash?
I'm close with my sisters and I have a few close friends too. Everybody has a different way of getting money, but there's no point getting money if you're not able to enjoy it. Everyone you are around should motivate you in a positive way. Money is one of the perks of positivity but by no means the most important.

Through your music and overall demeanour, it's clear you know what you want in life and aren't afraid to go after it. How were these views instilled in you?
I knew from an early age that this was what I wanted to do and I've been working towards this for a long time. I genuinely knew that eventually I would get a break although geographically the odds were against me.

Do you think people find your personality intimidating?
Some people do but I think that's when they haven't actually met me. If a person is nice to me then I'm nice in return. I've met tons of cool friends through music and they haven't run away yet.

Where would be your dream place to play show?
The O2 Arena or a main stage at a big festival. Performing in my hometown is always cool too of course because it's just so personal.

As a self-proclaimed Yardie, if you could choose any Jamaican artist to collaborate with, who would it be?
Vybz Kartel or Popcaan, mad bangers guaranteed!

Money is a common motif in many of your songs and you, like many of us, seem to be motivated by it. What are your thoughts on the quote 'Money can't buy happiness'?
Money cannot buy happiness but it can enhance the life of you and your loved ones. As long as you are a good person nobody can tell you anything.

Do you have a specific goal you're aiming for or are you taking things one day at a time?
I'm just starting, everyday I'm working harder and I've just been getting everything in place to make sure I can give the supporters something crazy every time I release. I'm taking things one day at a time but of course I aspire to be bigger than anyone can imagine.

@trillarybanks6

Styling: Kashmir Wickham
Make-up: Lai Makeup
Hair: Zateesha Barbour
Styling Assistant: Lea Federmann

MEET THE PRODUCERS:

KWES DARKO

PHOTO BY DANIELA K MONTIERO

Firstly, briefly introduce yourself.
Name is Kwes Darko, birthed at Westminster Hospital, raised in Camden, Lived in east, lived in west and ventured south.

My style of production is exactly that, my style of production.

What would you say are the most popular beats you've created?
Hard question that.
I'd say Connie Constance - 'Answer'.

What is your favourite song you've worked on and why?
All songs I have worked on have their moments of favouritism, but at this moment in time I'd say slowthai - 'North Nights'.

Do you think that production software becoming more accessible to just anyone is a good or bad thing for music?
It's a good thing, music is a way of expression and I believe everyone has the right to express themselves how they feel most comfortable. So giving that opportunity to a generation of new thinking minds can only generate the next wave of greats to come.

What influences you as a producer?
The brain/the human mind. I'm so intrigued and curious about the way each mind thinks in certain situations or circumstances. When I sit down with an artist my first thought is not to know what type of music they're into or what they're currently listening to, my first wave of thought is, "Who are you? What makes your mind tick? What has been behind you becoming the person who are today and how can I turn your thoughts and emotions into sound?"

How did you begin making music? Was it a particular influence or circumstance?
To keep it short and sweet, 'Boy in da Corner' and 'The College Dropout' were the beginning reasons to why I started making music. I was, and still am, a very reserved individual. As a younger I wasn't the best at expressing myself, I used to write poetry but it never really fully fulfilled the need to express without having to speak to people, then I heard both of the aforementioned albums and everything made sense. I knew what I had to do. The rest is history.

What draws you to creating instrumentals?
I just love sounds, I love music, I love the idea of being able to manipulate sonics that can evoke so much emo- tion and tell a story without having to say anything. Having that medium to be able to do that excites me. The feeling I get when I'm in the studio with an artist and the challenge that occurs to create the soundtrack to a real- ity the artist has shared with me in the past, or on the day, is like no other feeling when it clicks. I make music with a lot of visualisation in my head, so if I'm carving something, with slowthai for example, in the studio it's usu- ally me creating a sound field that represents a certain story that he expressed to me at some point in life or a conversation we've had on a subject matter. It's a deeper meaning when I'm crafting the soundtrack for it and it's beautiful when the soundtrack triggers certain emotions in him that lead to him being able to tell the story and leads us to create a short movie via sound.

Were you ever involved in any other musical projects besides what you are doing right now?
Yeah, I've been involved and active in music full time since 2009. If you go search up blue daisy you'll find a lot of things to occupy your eardrums. I've also done music for TV and various artists. I've been about and will continue to be about.

What, for you, is the perfect beat?
There isn't such a thing! The perfect beat can never exist. Not because perfection can never be met, but also because on the day of making a beat your aura may be placed in a certain line of the emotional spectrum and in that moment you may create what may be seen as the perfect beat in that moment but tomorrow can come and your aura is placed somewhere else and you create in that moment which could also feel like the perfect moment and a perfect beat.. you get the drift?

Basically if I have to say what the perfect beat is for me, it's a composition that can depict the mood of my spirit on the day so when I listen back to it places me in that mind set or aural space. Also it'll pointless to have the perfect beat, what would be the point of creating after that?

Can you tell us about any projects coming in 2018?
Slowthai project is in the music making machine as we speak, a lot of exciting pieces dropping from that.

Harve (pronounced Harv) is another artist I've been working closely with for the past two years now, crafting her sound and we're now at the stage were we're releasing it to the world. Her debut single, 'Caught Up', dropped 28th February and is circulating well at the moment.

There's a lot in the pipeline, I'll just let the music do the talking as the clock ticks on.

@KWESDARKO
soundcloud.com/kwesdarko

"THE FEELING I GET WHEN I'M IN THE STUDIO WITH AN ARTIST AND THE CHALLENGE THAT OCCURS TO CREATE THE SOUNDTRACK TO A REALITY THE ARTIST HAS SHARED WITH ME, IT'S LIKE NO OTHER FEELING WHEN IT CLICKS"





MEET THE PRODUCERS:

SANGO

PHOTO BY MARC PRODANOVIC

Firstly, briefly introduce yourself.
Hello, I'm Kai. Most may know me as Sango.

What would you say are the most popular beats you've created?
The most popular beats I've created have to be the ones that I didn't give to any artist. The ones I released on my own or kindly ask others to get on my song. That would be 'Middle of Things', 'Me 'De Amor', 'The Motive' and 'Na Hora'.

What is your favourite song you've worked on and why?
My favourite song I've worked on has to be 'Me De Amor'. It was my last shot at music. I was in school just trying to get my degree and when I released that song, it made me want to go harder.

Do you think that production software becoming more accessible to just anyone is a good or bad thing for music?
It's always a good thing. Those that have that ear, will create beautiful music regardless of knowledge and tools. They will find a way.
What influences you as a producer?
My family. I borrow bits and pieces from them that are always are in my music. I'm always into what they're into. I pay attention to what they would like to hear.

How did you begin making music? Was it a particular influence or circumstance?
I started making music when my mom's friend gifted us with this DAW called Acid Pro. We learned that and FL Studio. It was history. "We" meaning my brother and I.

What draws you to creating instrumentals?
I'm naturally trying to help writers out. One of my main goals is to help people think and create ideas. That's what draws me to creating instrumentals.

Were you ever involved in any other musical projects besides what you are doing right now?
I've been making music since I was 9 years old. I'm 26 now. I think I have about 700 to 1000 beats. I never counted, but it feels like it's that much. Probably is that much.

What, for you, is the perfect beat?
The perfect beat has to have emotion.

Can you tell us about any projects coming up in 2018?
New project with Xavier Omär in progress.

@SANGO_
soundcloud.com/sángo

"ONE OF MY MAIN GOALS IS TO HELP PEOPLE THINK AND CREATE IDEAS. THAT'S WHAT DRAWS ME TO CREATING INSTRUMENTALS"

MEET THE PRODUCERS:

STEEL BANGLEZ

PHOTO BY KAY IBRAHIM

"LAST WEEK I GOT OFF THE PHONE TO DRAKE'S MANAGER, OLIVER EL-KHATIB, SO THERE'S SOMETHING IN THE PIPELINE THERE"

Firstly, briefly introduce yourself.
My name is Steel Banglez, a music producer, songwriter, record label owner from East London.

What would you say are the most popular beats you've created?
I'd say some of my benchmark beats are 'Karlas Back', 'Ain't The Same' and 'Madness' by Mist, as well as 'No Words' by Dave, 'Go Down South' from Kept & Konan and 'Bad'.

What is your favourite song you've worked on and why?
'Madness' by Mist is definitely one of my favourites because the journey behind the track is deep. It was a day before Mist's tour and we were chilling in the front room where there was a picture of his mum; I was looking it, just making music and telepathically he spoke about his mum. It was a magical moment.

Do you think that production software becoming more accessible to just anyone is a good or bad thing for music?
I don't think production software is a good or bad thing for music; I think people understanding a certain type of quality of music is important. It's beautiful that there's something that more people can afford because music is art and a form of expression so who's really to say whether it's a good or bad thing.

What influences you as a producer?
I'd say my Punjabi culture and my upbringing in Forest Gate; being in the grime era and seeing all that happen. Jamaican culture as well, my best friends are Jamaican so growing up in the house they use to have sound systems and I would DJ there. Another influence is my past, my ups and downs, like a true artist.

How did you begin making music? Was it a particular influence or circumstance?
My mum's a music teacher and my dad is a poet so growing up there were always musical instruments around the house. One day using the recording system on the keyboard I started making beats and when my mum had enough money she bought me a compact PC; this was in the late 1990's, early 2000's.

What draws you to creating instrumentals?
There's something inside me, I wouldn't go to the studio and force music. I've always been like a true artist; a true musician. When I'm feeling a certain way then I'll play the piano and from the basis of that I'll make a beat, I've always been like that. If I don't feel anything then I can't make music.

Were you ever involved in any other musical projects besides what you are doing right now?
Growing up I DJ'd for D Double E who is a grime legend as well as being part of a pirate radio station called Mystic FM. I've also done a lot of work for Krept & Konan early in their careers, I've done work for Yungen, Cashtastic, Wiley, Big H and Young Meth who's an early pioneer of UK rap. I've been out here for a while.

What, for you, is the perfect beat?
There's never a perfect beat. Nothing is perfect in this world so it can never be perfect. To me, it just has to feel good. So I would replace the word 'perfect' with 'feeling'. Like I said, there's something inside of me, if the music touches it I'm like like, yo people are gonna love it.

Can you tell us about any projects coming up in 2018?
Last week I got off the phone to Drake's manager, Oliver El-Khatib, so there's something in the pipeline there. Also, I've been working on my album, but I want to drop an EP first with some features. My new single is coming out soon, it's a massive song. Success ain't gonna hinder me into different avenues, I'm always going to stick to the studio so whatever happens, happens. I'm going to leave it into the hands of the Universe.

@STEELBANGLEZ
soundcloud.com/steelbanglez



PHOTO RETROSPECTIVE

WORDS BY RICARDO CAMPBELL

Rayscorruptedmind

YOU SHOULD BE FAMILIAR WITH HIS WORK IF YOU'VE BEEN LURKING ON TRAVIS SCOTT'S INSTAGRAM, BUT IN CASE YOU'RE YET TO DISCOVER RAYSCORRUPTEDMIND, MEET THE PHOTOGRAPHER THAT'S SHOT YOUR FAVOURITE RAPPER AND WCW. FROM HUMBLE BEGINNINGS, HE'S BUILT AN EVER-GROWING CULT-FOLLOWING WITH HIS WORK. WHILE WORKING WITH SCOTT, RAYSCORRUPTEDMIND'S NETWORK HAS SPREAD THROUGHOUT MUSIC AND SOCIAL SCENES. TYPICAL PHOTOS SHOW HIM HANGING WITH EVERYONE FROM WINNIE HARLOW TO BLOODY OSIRIS. HIS SUBJECTS ARE DIVERSE, BUT ALWAYS CAN'T- SIT-WITH-US LEVELS OF ICONIC.

TAKE A LOOK AT HIS PORTFOLIO IN THESE VERY PAGES, WITH APPEARANCES LIL UZI VERT, KENDRICK LAMAR, AND - NATURALLY - AN UNPUBLISHED PHOTO OF METRO BOOMIN THROWING A STACK OF CASH ON A STRIPPER'S ASS. BECAUSE, LET'S BE REAL, NOTHING SAYS GET MONEY LIKE BLOWING A RACK AT THE STRIP CLUB. WE CATCH UP WITH THE GRAM'S MOST CULT SHOOTER TO HEAR THE STORIES BEHIND HIS BEST KNOWN IMAGES...

How did you get into photography?

Before I moved to New York, this kid Josh I used to know had a camera. One day, it was probably like two in the morning and we were hanging out in front of my ex-girlfriend's house; he had the camera in his car, I just grabbed the camera and started shooting with it. Then I was looking at the images and I was like, "wow this is actually fun to do," so I started picking up a camera and shooting with it. Then I moved to New York, probably like a month after that and I still had no idea how to use a camera, so I basally just used to be in New York by myself practising, shooting different objects and stuff, to learn lighting until I felt confident enough to shoot people. I eventually went out and started shooting my friends.

As a creative artist, is there anyone we'd be surprised to know you're influenced by?

My idols are Andy Warhol and Michael Jackson but I try not to focus on other people's stuff because I'm so focused on what I'm doing. I like my stuff to be perfect, I don't really look at other people's work, I just try to think how can I make mine even better.

With photography becoming more accessible to everyone, do you think it's a good or bad thing?

I think it's a good thing because kids love getting to see what their favourite artist is doing besides what the media shows them. There's kids getting to see behind the scenes, it's way better for them because they get to see more of what their favourite artists are doing nowadays, not just what the magazines are putting out there, you can see their actual lifestyle. It keeps the kids happy and inspired.

Looking back to when you started out, how does it feel to be in the position you are in now?

Man, when I first started out I told myself I was going to show the world how I see the world, and make sure I make everyone I shoot look their best. I want everybody to look at my photos and be like, "this is the best picture I've ever scene of myself." Me knowing I can make people look their best makes me feel better, so to see now that people are 100% trusting me with their image, it's a really good feeling.

Have you ever been starstruck over a subject?

I'm not gonna lie, when I first seen Young Thug I was pretty shocked. Young Thug's one of my favourite artists, so seeing him was crazy. This man is like a legend [laughs].

What's the most important lesson photography has taught you?

A super important lesson is that if you're shooting somebody always be respectable of their image, most of these kids don't understand photos are forever, once you put it out there it's not going anywhere. You should never post an image of somebody if they're looking crazy just because they're famous or for attention. Photography is art, so you should show that in your images.

Who out there would you like to shoot in the creative scene?

Right now, I really want to shoot Lorde and Lady Gaga this year.

What's the most bizarre experience you've had on tour?

One time I was walking around after the show with my friend White Trash Tyler and a group of kids came running at me yelling my name and so I stopped, they were so excited to see me, yelling how I changed their lives and stuff, and how I keep them motivated everyday. So I remember the feeling, after that, I was like, "ok, it's time to go full speed and go full force now," because if I'm inspiring all these kids, it's like damn, I must be doing something right.

You're currently creating your second photography book. How did you approach the project and plan how to structure it?

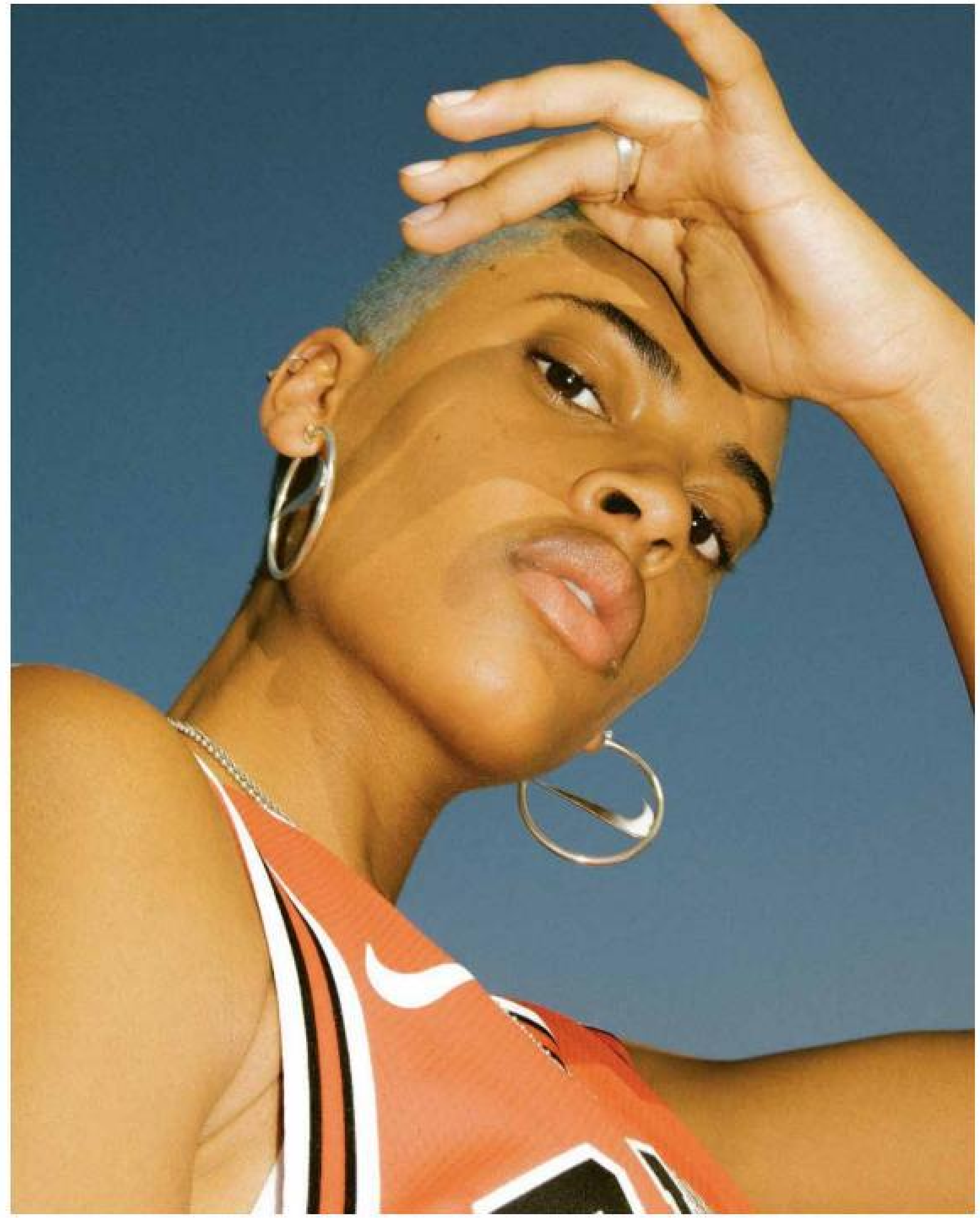
For this second book I wanted kids to know they're a part of the process, everything I do is for these kids. That's why throughout the book I'm going to have notes, because kids send me letters everyday, that I'm changing their lives and stuff. I'm going to pick the top 20 that I've read and really felt something from it, I'm going to have the kids write it on a letter and I'm going to post it throughout the book. So this whole process behind the second book is to keep kids inspired and for them to know, believe in yourself that you can do this or do that; I want to show through my work [they] keep me going.

To you, what's the importance of allowing your following to be apart of the creative process?

I'm all about the people I inspire and motivate, because when I was growing up I had no role models or anybody to guide me. I remember feeling like ain't nobody care, so now for me to be in a position for kids to feel like they have somebody who cares about them, is the main reason why I'm doing this.

@RAYSCORRUPTEDMIND

"WHEN I FIRST SEEN YOUNG THUG I WAS PRETTY SHOCKED"



NIKE BASKETBALL CAMPAIGN
MODEL - ANNAHSTASIA

That's my favourite shot from the campaign, her hair was blue and once I had seen her hair I was like I want the sky in the back with just a straight portrait of her. That's one of my favourite shots especially because that's one of my favourite shoots I have ever done, so once I had taken that photo I had told the Nike people we don't even need to shoot anymore, we got the shot right here.



PLAYBOI CARTI

That was my first day of the Trav show, I went on the Birds Eye View tour with Travis. After the show we went back to LA and Carti hit me up asking where I was at, he was like, "pull up to the crib." I remember pulling up to the crib probably two hours later. When I had got there he was half asleep, and he's like, "we still gotta shoot something," so he goes up to his room and opens this Louis bag with an insane amount of money in it and then we had just started shooting.



METRO BOOMIN



RICH THE KID

He was in New York and had FaceTimed me like, "I'ma be here, am I not going to see you?" I was like, "nah, nah, I'ma pull up" and then we were in the studio. Every time he's in New York we shoot something, so we shot that one.

KENDRICK LAMAR

I forgot which city that was but it was after the show. They wanted to meet me, so I went over to where they were at and then him and Trav had a conversation, we were just chilling so I just asked him if we could take that portrait, so we shot that one.



LIL UZI VERT

That was before 'XO Tour Lif3' had come out, he was playing music and he had said, "Yo, I might just drop this as a throwaway, I don't really like it" - he was playing 'XO Tour Lif3'. I was like, "Bro, you gotta drop this song, this is the main song, this is gonna be huge." Today it's one of the biggest songs out right now. When he had first played it, I knew it was going to be a big song, he thought it was going to be a throwaway, so the turnaround was insane.



QUAVO

That again was on tour, after they'd finished performing we were about to go backstage and every time I see him we take photos. So he already knew once he had seen me it's straight like, let me pose, let me take that photo.



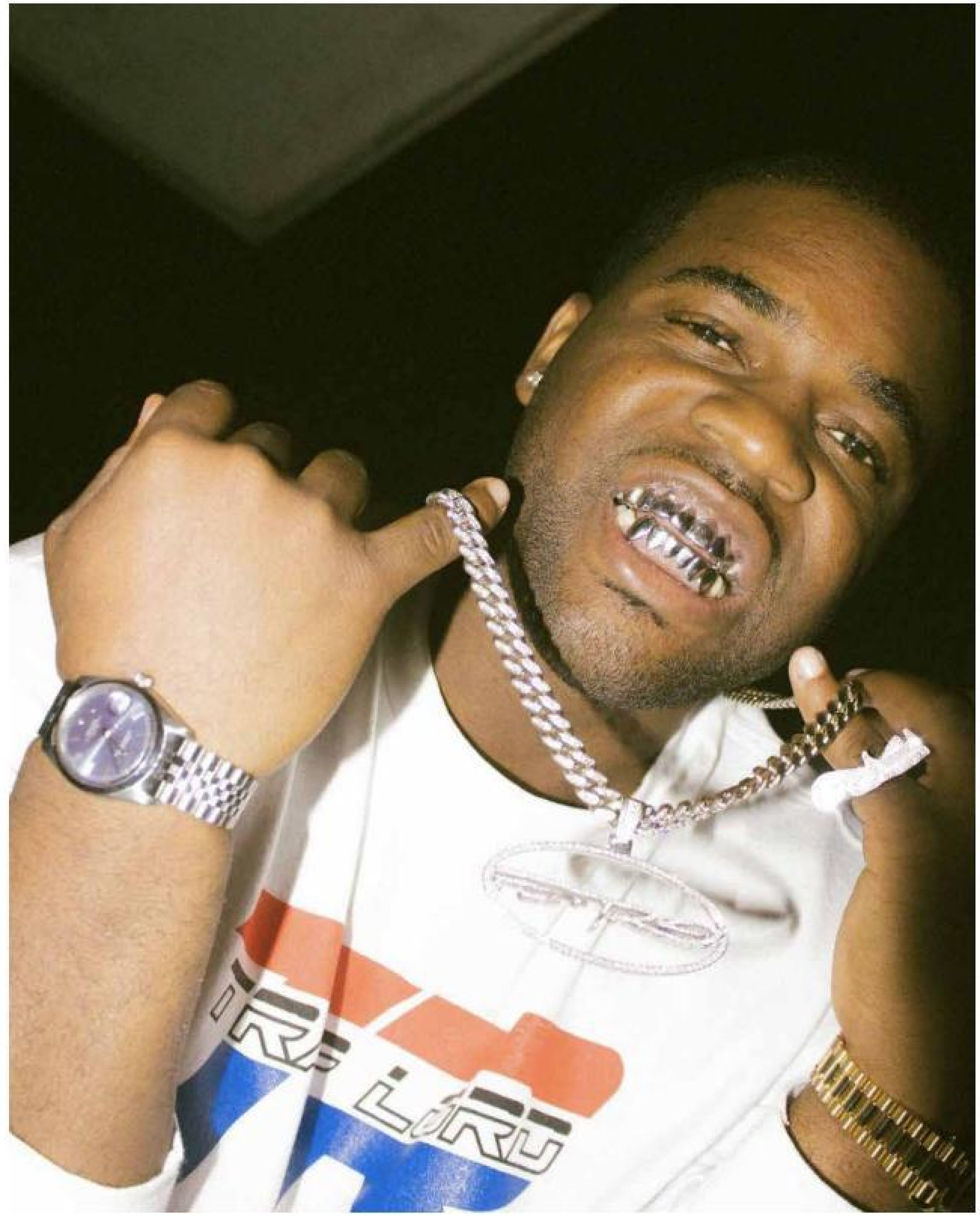


BELLA HADID AND KENDALL JENNER

That was in London after the Wireless show, after the show we were all at [Finsbury] park hanging out, and then they were posing. I told them to do this pose because it looked like the best side, it looked really good, so they posed and I took that photo. Once I had taken the photo and seen it, I was like this is a really good photo, very.

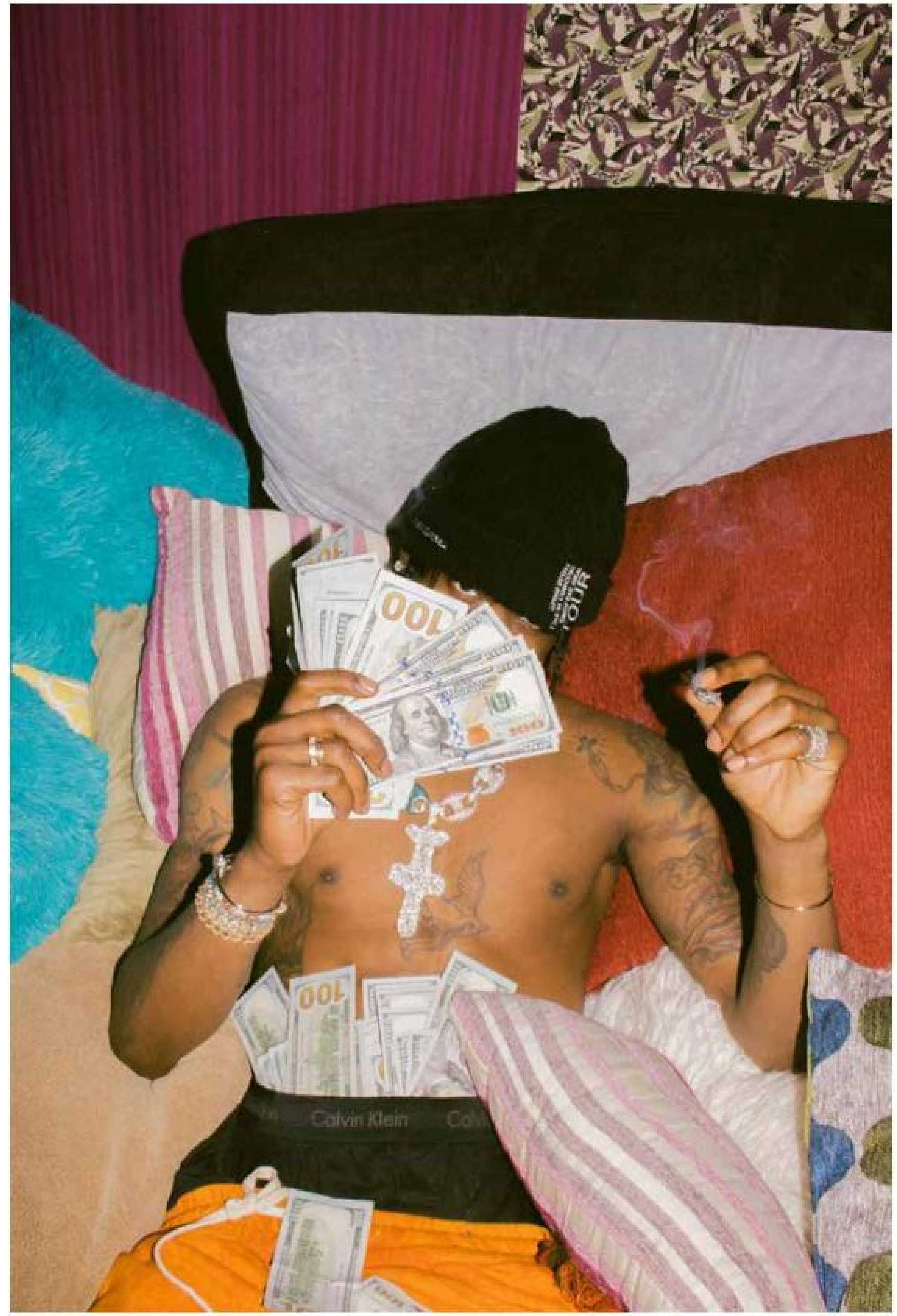
ASAP FERG

That was the first time I met Ferg or even seen him. My friend Bloody Osiris, he asked me where I was at and I was like "in the city," and he said, "pull up, I'm at Ferg's crib." So that was the first time I saw Ferg, I went to his crib and he was cool, he had seen my stuff, saying, "we should shoot some shit." So right there he went onto his balcony and we had just shot that photo. That was the first photo I had shot of him.





LIL YACHTY



TRAVIS SCOTT

That was during the Birds Eye View tour, again, that was literally right before the show, I was like, "Yo, we gotta shoot something, we need to shoot a hit, some iconic ass photo." Then straight there he's like, "let's get to it" and then we shot that one right before the show, like a few minutes before the show.



SLOWTHAI

PHOTOS BY THURSDAY.
WORDS BY LILY MERCER

MEET SLOWTHAI, THE NEW ENFANT TERRIBLE OF THE BRITISH MUSIC INDUSTRY. ARTISTS LIKE THIS COME AROUND ONCE EVERY COUPLE OF DECADES. CRAFTING SLAP-YOU-IN-THE-FACE TUNES WITH AN ADDICTIVE ENERGY, THE INIMITABLE NORTHAMPTON MC IS RAPIDLY TAKING OVER THE UK'S CAPITAL. BUT WHILE THE AGGRESSION IS WHAT GRABS YOU, HE'S ACTUALLY A REALLY NICE YOUNG CHAP WITH GOOD INTENTIONS. HIS LYRICAL SKILL SET IS SECOND TO NONE, SPITTING OVER BEATS CRAFTED BY HIS SONIC CO-D, KWES DARKO. VIPER SPEAK TO THE RAPPER SHAKING EVERYTHING UP IN LONDON AND BEYOND.

What have you got coming next - I feel like you've got a little project rolling out?
Nah not really, we're just building up working getting everything in the right place. Making sure we got the works so that does the speaking, rather than being out here, tryna be a party boy.

Yeah it's probably quite hard 'cause you're quite in demand right now with parties, you know?
I'm cute and life is good, we living. Never be sad, be happy.

That's a good motto. You've got a very high energy level - your shows are the type that you shouldn't go to if you don't wanna get hit in the face.
Yeah and if you don't like sweat, you gotta 'low it. It's just somewhere you just can be yourself. You ain't gotta watch and think, "oh it's for the gram." You can be who you are, everyone can be somebody. The shows go crazy, if you throw up on somebody it's OK. If you feel sad, come be happy and if you're angry, you can go be angry, let it out but don't hurt anybody intentionally.

There's a real punk vibe to your shows - moshing and not caring about what's going on around you. With the London scene people are still aware - but you've taken that away with this energy.
Everyone focuses too much on the look and the way they should be, rather than just being themselves when they go out. I'm hyperactive, I'm very touchy-feely, all over the place. So for me to come and be all chilled? I feel it's weak how people try and separate themselves, like they're the sorry people and you're up here on this level, when really everyone is the same. So everyone should be equal and think they're just as great as everyone else. People need to let loose - everything is too controlled by perception. It's more rebellion - not so much punk, it's an energy in itself. If you don't really care, and don't want to be like, "I don't want to get my shoes dirty." Have fun and don't worry about what anyone thinks, think for yourself and follow your heart. And if that's punk, then that's punk - I think it's just being, the need to just be. If anyone tells you you can't do something, do it - if you really want to do it. Just think, what is right for yourself? Then break through everything else, break boundaries break limits. Just shout in people's faces - if you gotta let 'em know! I think it comes from people not giving you the opportunity, when people push you down and oppress you, the more you get it, the more anger! As opposed to I'll just bite my top lip and sit in the corner, you know?

A lot of UK artists are just about to kill everything! I've been a fan of UK rap and UK hip hop scene for about 15 years and this moment feels really important, because I haven't seen it in about 10 years. Do you feel like you're on the brink of something special?
I feel everyone is just pushing to do something now. It's not like there's a boundary where there are any limits - I think it feels authentic and nice. There are some things that are forced, I don't have to point them out because if the shoe fits, it fits. A lot of people have ulterior motives. But then you've got the good people who are humble, they'll thrive. They've got nothing but love for music and doing something for the bigger picture in general. They've got a vision, I think that's beautiful and it's how we all get along.

The entire 'I Wish I Knew' EP was produced by Kwes Darko with one song co-produced by you. You obviously want to work with Kwes more than any other producer, what's it like to know a producer that you have that bond with?
When you have a relationship with someone that's so good, you're comfortable - like your best friends or your mum for example. You can spend the most time apart from someone and when you come back, you're just straight, on the same page. It's family. We speak everyday, he's like my best friend as well as my big bro and my producer. He's my guidance, he teaches me things from lessons he's learnt. He understands, he lived a similar life and we're both on the same page. It's not even a thing where I'd be like, "let's make something like this,"

"I'M CUTE AND LIFE IS GOOD, WE LIVING. NEVER BE SAD, BE HAPPY"

because that takes the fun out of it. It's more of a joint thing - it's just creating bangers and having fun and pushing. I think he pushes me to the point I gotta work harder, then I wanna work harder. We learn from each other and push each other to where we can only be the best. That's what the brotherhood is about, it's the same with everyone in our team - it's all family, we all love each others company. It's like friends we never had and we've linked up and it's instant, that's why we connect. I can go and meet 100 other people but they're not Kwes, that's my bro!

On 'Round and Round', there's a bit where you feel like you're listening to a pirate radio set - you hear Kwes on the mic and you in the background and those little touches are special, the production levels outside of making a beat. It's so much more than how the beat is made and you rapping on it.
Everyone punches in and we record one take. Fair enough, we might switch up for the ninth take when we've done it 100 times, just to get raw energy and to keep pushing. We're trying to get the feeling of old music - the original stuff so you can feel it. It's actually got feeling in it; the points in time. This music comes from things like heartbreak, or people pissing you off in general, or going to the shop and the price being up. Or thinking about a memory, it's just a feeling.

You speak for a group of people people that no rapper's really spoken to for a while. It's a certain vibe you can only get if you live in that environment - for example if you go to any hood in London, the high road looks the same - everywhere you go you feel it. I think that's what people get when they listen to your music. If you've lived in a certain world, you've known people from a certain world, you can relate to a lot of topics you're talking about but if you haven't lived it, you'll never understand.
Like if you got a silver plate bringing you food, I don't know if you're gonna understand it as much. It's relatable, as anything in life you only like something if you have some type of connection with it. I only speak from my experiences and the people around me. Even self discovery, the more you write the more you open memories of things that you don't ever really think about and they come back, it's like you're drawing - it's like a nostalgia. So anyone that's lived that or comes from the same environment will connect and endure to it.

There is a certain hedonistic lifestyle, it's about good times. On 'Jiggle' you rap, "order a taxi everyone's sniffing." Lots of people can be like "I've know those nights," or "I've been in that world."
Or even going to the chippy, the chip shop. Everyone can go to the chippy, but I can't imagine no princess that goes to a private school that's there six days a week walks to the chippy down the end of the road to get chips. I tried talking more about things that everyone does, 'cause there are loads of things going on, loads of madness. Everyone's talking about being bad but there's more to life, let's be real. What do you do everyday?

Being from Northampton, there's something about you that stands out. UK music tends to only focus on rappers from London, do you think people are finally ready to look at rappers from outside the city?
I think it's the Internet, because everything is so much more accessible. You're two seconds away from America or a click away and you can see everything that's going on. It's not as far as before, when you were using CDs and mini disks and having to go to record shops to get an actual song. I think everyone wants to find something new, everyone's looking all the time. People are open to look, it's not just, "nah, they have a funny accent, I don't get their slang or the way they dress." Now everyone in London seems to dress the way I dress, I think times are changing; Bob Dylan said that.

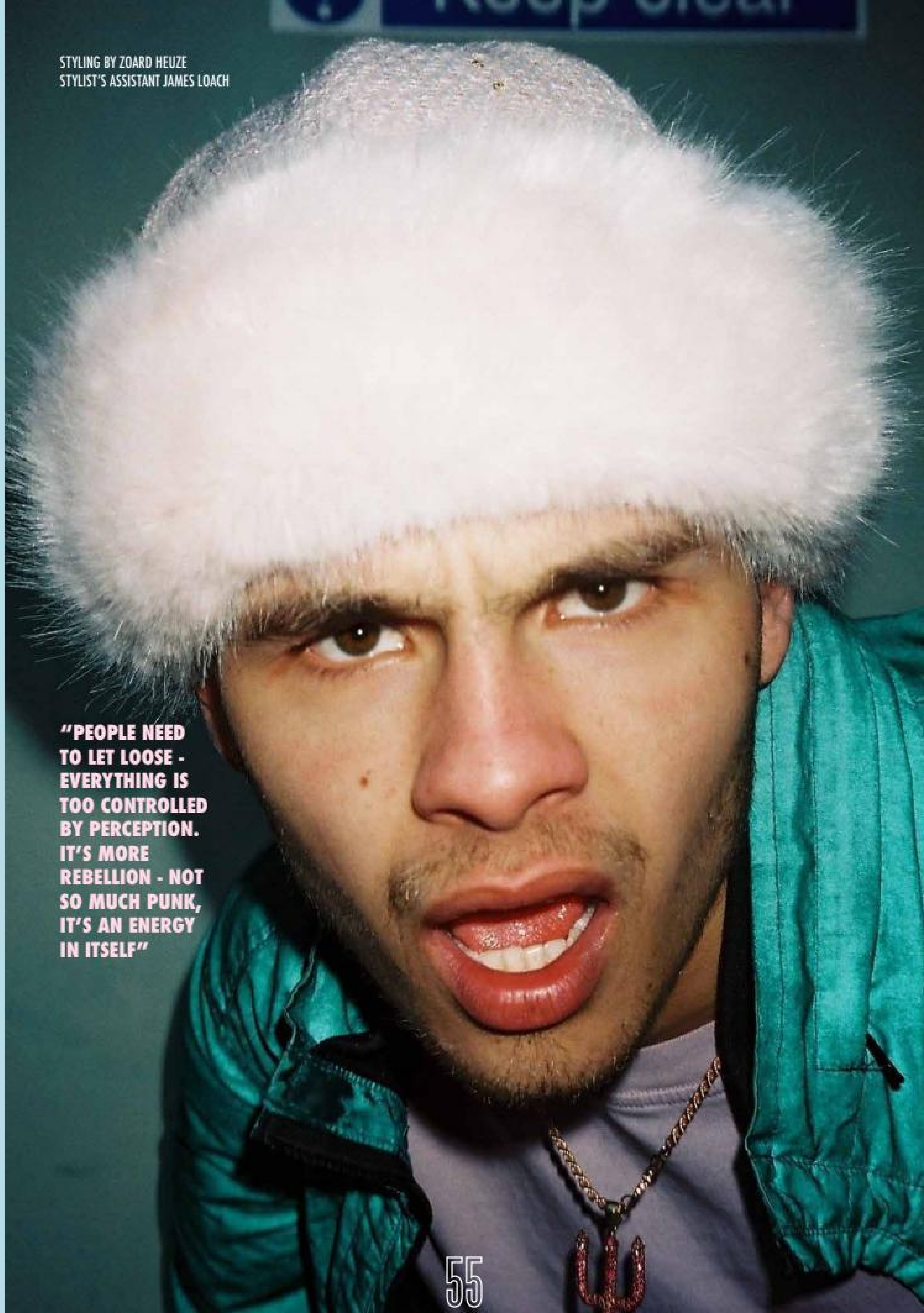
It's very true. If you look at indie and brit pop, there are cities they focus on all over the country - it's only rap that's never really looked at outside of London...
Majority of London rappers looked to America, and still even now to this day slang all comes from America. Nothing Great About Britain you know what I mean?

'I Wish I Knew' is your latest release - but you dropped two loose songs 'North Nights' and 'The Bottom'. There's a video for 'North Nights'. Is 'The Bottom' video coming next?
Let's find the hell out, Sherlock Holmes baby! Let's go and look get that magnifying glass - there's hidden messages... illuminati. When it's ready and beautiful and beautiful and ready, the world will know. And when the world knows, then they'll know!

You've co-produced with Kwes, is that something you want to do more of?
Yeah, I definitely want to produce a lot more. But I want to focus on my writing and elaborate, I still make beats and stuff. There's beats, there's tunes there's stuff. I'm still active. When everything is right, who knows - there may be some serious tracks of doom, some rock or indie? I might just change my name and start singing indie forever - just play with a guitar and busk on Oxford Circus outside the Nike shop, with a, what's them hats?

A flat cap?
Yeah, a flat cap. And a bowtie and they'd call me Dagenham Damian.

@slowthai
soundcloud.com/slowthai



STYLING BY ZOARD HEUZE
STYLIST'S ASSISTANT JAMES LOACH

"PEOPLE NEED TO LET LOOSE - EVERYTHING IS TOO CONTROLLED BY PERCEPTION. IT'S MORE REBELLION - NOT SO MUCH PUNK, IT'S AN ENERGY IN ITSELF"

DIRTY MONEY

ILLUSTRATIONS BY KACEY KAL
WORDS BY RORY OAKLEY

REMEMBER WHEN YOU THOUGHT MONEY LAUNDERING WAS A LITERAL TERM? WELL IT TURNS OUT THAT THE ART OF CLEANING MONEY IS FAR MORE COMPLEX THAN THROWING SOME BANK NOTES IN THE WASHING MACHINE. IT'S AN ART FORM, REQUIRING FUNDS TO MOVE FROM ONE LOCATION TO ANOTHER WITHOUT A TRACE.

It's been years since money laundering was this relevant in pop culture, probably around season four of Breaking Bad. But thanks to recent TV shows like McMafia and Ozark, us regular heads are becoming au fait with the technical side of cleaning funds. So read on for a breakdown of the history and significance of scrubbing skrilla...

Money making schemes are forever. The ways in which you can make money are constantly evolving, with loop holes to beat 'The Man' appearing everyday. The common issue, however, is how to bank it with no questions asked, especially when you didn't make it legally. The topic of money laundering was thrown into my world when someone recommended the Netflix series, Ozark. The show features an all-American family getting caught up with a Mexican cartel when their Dad becomes responsible for cleaning massive amounts of money. The show inspired me to delve deeper into the art so follow me as I scope out the wonderful world of money laundering and the misperceptions of who the good guys and villains are.

Ozark's opening monologue is a poetic exploration of the importance of money, beginning, "Scratch. Wampum. Dough. Sugar. Clams. Loot. Bills. Bones. Bread. Bucks. Money. That which separates the haves from the have-nots. But what is money? It's everything if you don't have it, right? Half of all American adults have more credit card debt than savings. 25% have no savings at all." Even without an economics degree, it's easy to see the frailty of the banking system. Especially if you've seen the 2015 film, The Big Short, which details corruption in the US mortgage market, leading to the "Great Recession" of 2008. Credit allows us to purchase things before we can afford them, we prove our reliability by repaying the money in time. For that we get a gold star, deeming us trustworthy. But if the majority of people can't pay it back, then the house of cards will fall.

Money laundering is an old school process, which has been around since before Christ. Looking back to 2000 BC in Ancient China, the average working class man would hide their earnings away from wealthy rulers who would snatch their hard earned money and banish them, kinda like an early Deebo from Friday. Fast forward to 1930's America and money laundering was adopted by Italian Mob Kings like John Gotti and Lucky Luciano, who would invest their money into local businesses. Blending their money with income from the local laundrette or café resulted in clean money. Which in turn kept establishments such as the FBI and NYPD off their backs without directly having to pay them off.

Following hours spent binge watching Ozark, I had one burning question - does this shit happen in everyday life? Digging deeper I found a variety of examples to pick from, but before I go into that here are a couple of key moments in money laundering...

Number 1: Al Capone & The Mafia.

Money Laundering is often used as a means of hiding income in order to avoid paying higher taxes. With many tactics in place to avoid declaring illegal money, money laundering rose in popularity. So much so that in early 20th Century America, law enforcement began to investigate finances. In 1927, the Supreme Court ruled that illegally earned income was subject to income tax, which led to the notorious gangster Al Capone being charged with income tax evasion in 1931.

Despite being a local celebrity, known for his flamboyance, Capone had never once filed tax reports. Known as a local businessman, he and other Italian-American gangsters are attributed with coining the term "money laundering," after they allegedly purchased laundromats. Many gangsters would create an imitation business, known as a "front," in order to claim illegal money was legitimately earned through an innocent company. The money from their prostitution and bootleg alcohol rackets subsidised the business, while the clean laundromat income was filtered out to line their pockets with money that couldn't be traced to any illegal dealings.

Number 2: Murder Inc.

Ja Rule Voice It's Murdaa! Now we all remember how dominant Murder Inc. was in the early 2000's, with Ja slapping out hood anthems and hits for the ladies left, right and centre. Let's not forget Ashanti, arguably one of the most constant voices in R&B's era of phenomenal female stars. Lloyd even had a few hits in his time. Vanessa Carlton too! Yup, 'A Thousand Miles' Vanessa Carlton. We forgot that happened too, but she spent at year on their roster in 2006...

When it comes to the demise of Murder Inc, everybody talks about 50 Cent being the main catalyst of their empire crumbling. In fact, it was an investigation exposing CEO Irv Gotti for writing clean label cheques to a narco King Pin, Kenneth "Supreme" McGriff, in exchange for dirty money to help fund various projects. Guess they all got 'Caught Up' - pun fully intended.

Number 3: HSBC (Heinous Stealing Banking Chiefs)

HSBC are the prime example of crooks in plain site, as detailed in an episode of the Netflix show, 'Dirty Money'. The banking conglomerate were found to be assisting Mexican drug cartels with laundering their money. In 2013 the Huffington Post reported, "HSBC Gets Small Fine For Terrorist Transactions," detailing deals with militant group Hezbollah, in addition to Mexico's deadly drug cartels. The small fine was $881 million; a drop in the

"IN 2000 BC IN ANCIENT CHINA, THE AVERAGE WORKING CLASS MAN WOULD HIDE THEIR EARNINGS AWAY FROM WEALTHY RULERS WHO WOULD SNATCH THEIR HARD EARNED MONEY AND BANISH THEM, KINDA LIKE AN EARLY DEEBO FROM FRIDAY"



ocean compared to the amount that was laundered.

This confirms the impact of money laundering, which starts on your local high street and leads all the way up to the big suits on Wall Street. Though the men behind the HSBC case were deemed "too big for jail," the guys at Murder Inc came close. They were facing up to 20 years behind bars before being acquitted of all counts in December 2005. Though they had support from their parent label Def Jam, the case affected their reputation and they later filed for bankruptcy, failing to survive due to the amount they had to payback. It goes to show how money and image can affect the outcome of one's wrong doing.

The Good Guys

It seems rappers have learned a lesson from the likes of Murder Inc. Nowadays there is a major focus on investing rap money into clean business that benefit themselves and others. For example, legendary New York rappers Jadakiss and Styles P launched a joint venture called 'Juice For Life,' bringing fresh juices to residents of their Yonkers borough. Not only is it a clever move business-wise, it allows them to provide their community with nutritious juices at an affordable price, promoting health in a deprived area of the city. The establishment allows them to make good money and leave their community with a lasting impression, furthermore it's something they can one day leave with their families to make a profit for years to come. Likewise, the duo have reportedly invested in local car washes, another example of a business that creates jobs and will have a high demand for decades to come.

West Coast rapper Nipsey Hussle is another great example of musicians investing their money into legitimate business. A long time independent artist, like Ghostface Killah, he recently ventured into the cryptocurrency business, launching his own app. Having released his 2013 album 'Crenshaw' as a free download, he offered physical copies for $100. While many thought that was extortionate, his fans bought 100 of them - not a bad amount to make when you're receiving 100% of the profit! He went on to release his 2014 mixtape, 'Mailbox Money' for the higher price of $1000, still totally free online. He sold 60 copies.

Speaking to The Guardian about his decision to offer his music for sale this way, Nipsey explained that even he was surprised at the response, "As much as I believe in it. Every time I get a transaction, I get a text on my phone and I've been hitting them back. The feedback and the connection I have with these people help me understand the psychology of the person paying $1,000 for some songs that, realistically, you could download for free."

In summary of this exploration into money laundering and its effects on popular culture, I want to pose a question - do the London Metropolitan Police Force treat Grime and U.K. Rap music as a form of money laundering? I ask this because the police consistently shut down UK rap shows by artist such as North West London's Skrapz. If you ask me, there seems to be a hidden agenda to stop those that came from the streets from making legitimate money.

This has been happening to Giggs for over a decade, with countless shows and public appearances cancelled. Even a questionable sentencing not too long after he signed his deal with XL Recordings. Luckily Giggs prevailed and now PC No Good's son is listening to 'Active' on FIFA 18 and his daughter's spinning 'Lingo' in her room with tickets to Giggs' next show on her wish-list. Absolutely priceless\

"THE FEEDBACK AND THE CONNECTION I HAVE WITH THESE PEOPLE HELPS ME UNDERSTAND THE PSYCHOLOGY OF THE PERSON PAYING $1,000 FOR SOME SONGS THAT, REALISTICALLY, YOU COULD DOWNLOAD FOR FREE"

- NIPSEY HUSSLE

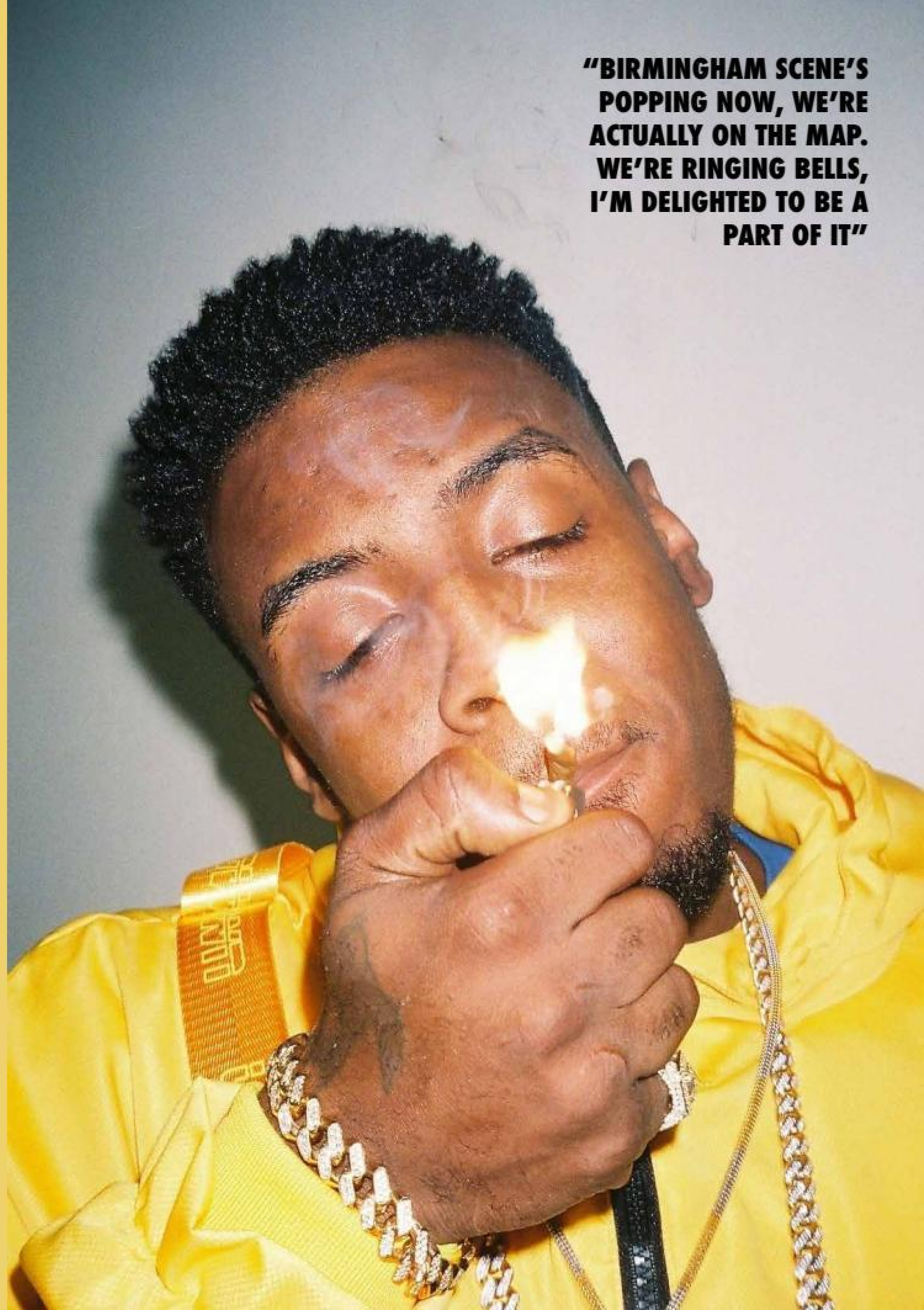


PHOTOS BY THURSDAY.
WORDS BY DYLAN AROLOYE

MIST

THE TRIALS AND TRIBULATIONS OF MAN ARE TALES OLDER THAN TIME. ON THEIR QUEST FOR SUCCESS, MANY FAIL; BUT NOT MIST. AGAINST ALL ODDS, HE'S RISEN TO BECOME ONE OF THE BRIGHTEST STARS IN THE UK SCENE. HE'S LOST CLOSE FAMILY MEMBERS, SERVED PRISON TIME, BEEN EVICTED FROM HIS HOME WHILE GRIEVING, AND MANAGED TO SURVIVE IT ALL WITH HIS SPIRIT IN TACT; PROBABLY WHY LISTENING TO HIS MUSIC FEELS SO DAMN GOOD! VIPER TALKS TO THE MC BRIDGING CULTURES THROUGH RAP.

"BIRMINGHAM SCENE'S POPPING NOW, WE'RE ACTUALLY ON THE MAP. WE'RE RINGING BELLS, I'M DELIGHTED TO BE A PART OF IT"



MiST's cool, calm, collected yet charismatic personality bleeds through his music. He's found the balance between the guy you don't want to mess with and the guy you want to rave with. Listening to him and his boys get ready for his headline show at the O2 Forum in London, there's an undeniable energy floating amongst the team. Following two sold-out tours, the tour was his third UK run taking place before he begins a run of festival line-ups lasting all Summer. Asked how he was feeling after the success he's had in the past year, he replied simply, "feeling better, striving!" His relentless work rate and cinematic visuals have put him in a space that not many people in the UK rap scene can say they are apart of. On first hearing of MiST, I was shocked he was from Birmingham. After giving him a listen, I was instantly drawn to his music.

The lyrics and the confidence with which he was rapping completely blurred the Birmingham accent, allowing me to really relate to what he was speaking about. MiST has actively broken walls down and built relationships that will impact both Birmingham and London in the near future. Even on tour, he put on for his city bringing Brum artists, Lotto Boyz and Mowgli out for the shows.

He also brought out MoStack, a frequent collaborator who appears on the 'Diamond in the Dirt' EP twice on 'Uber' and 'Mosh Pit'. Their relationship dates back to 2016, when the East London rapper jumped on 'Times' from the 'M I S to the T' EP. On the song MiST raps, "Me and mo on the track that's a mad hype," a statement that has since proven itself to be true. At the London show, MoStack performed a mini-set of his own before the pair encouraged fans to wild out while they shot a video for their track, 'Mosh Pit'. The two have a close musical relationship, working on many tracks including Mo's 'Screw & Brew' and J Hus' 'Fisherman'. His latest EP features artists such as Haile from WSTRN and Nines. One of the few MCs that can flirt with grime and rap without seeming uncommitted. He can make a song with Mercury Prize nominees like J Hus and Jessie Ware, two polar opposites of British music.

Life hasn't been easy for MiST; he was forced to grow up fast after losing both his parents within three months of each other, which resulted in his house being repossessed. Soon after he got in a high-speed police chase, receiving charges and a stint in prison. Seeing this moment as his turning point, MiST used the time of isolation to soul search and understand who he was and what he wanted to do. He regularly references his time inside, "Pen was a pit stop, touch road then I licked off." The experience shaped him as a writer, soon after being released from prison he rekindled his passion for making music, focusing on his hometown first before linking up with platforms like P110 and SB.TV, which exposed MiST to the masses.

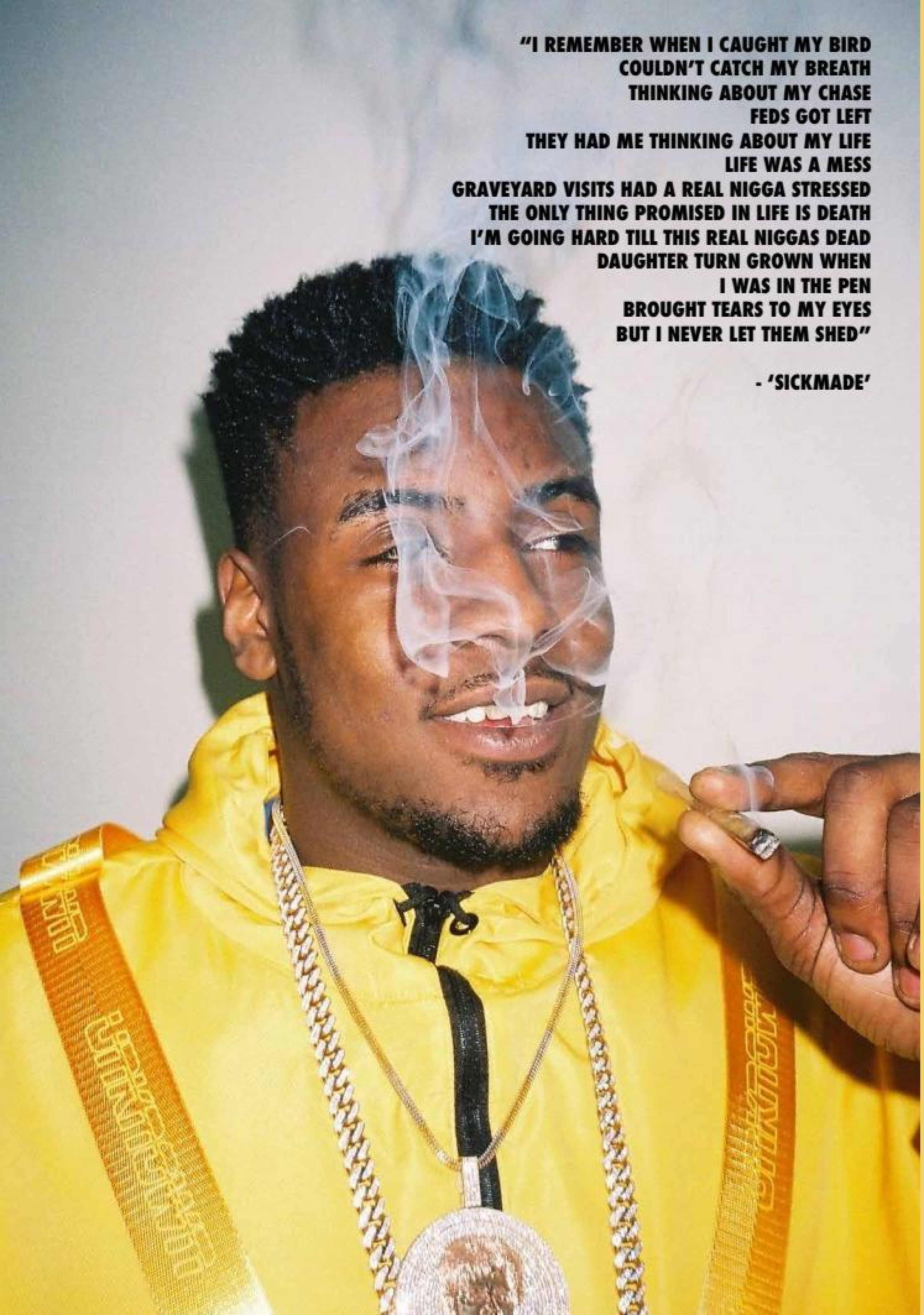
Hailing from Birmingham, MiST has had the huge task of breaking through the UK rap scene as an artist that is not from London. For those unfamiliar, the city is the second largest and most populated city, following London. Located a couple of hours north of the UK's capital, it's historically been seen as an industrial city. In 1791 it was hailed as "the first manufacturing town in the world" as it rose to prominence following the Industrial revolution. Fast forward a few decades and the city has lost it's glory, as it's seen as less metropolitan compared to smaller cities situated further north, like Manchester and Liverpool. The stigma of Birmingham is unfounded, with the city's accent repeatedly topping the 'Worst British Accent' polls. MiST makes light of this in 'Nothing beats a Brummy', Birmingham's parody of Nike's 'Proud To Be A Londoner' campaign. In the video MiST turns to the camera with a smile and asks,"What's wrong with the Birmingham accent?" There's nothing wrong with the accent at all, but it partially highlights the London-centric focus of Britain's rap and grime scenes; very few artists based outside of London make it in the industry. For years this has been the case, with a

"MANY LISTENERS WERE UNAWARE OF THE MEANING WHEN HE SPAT, "HOLD TIGHT ALL MY APNAS , KARLAS, GOURAS," PUNJABI WORDS REFERRING TO ASIANS, BLACKS AND WHITES"



**"I REMEMBER WHEN I CAUGHT MY BIRD
COULDN'T CATCH MY BREATH
THINKING ABOUT MY CHASE
FEDS GOT LEFT
THEY HAD ME THINKING ABOUT MY LIFE
LIFE WAS A MESS
GRAVEYARD VISITS HAD A REAL NIGGA STRESSED
THE ONLY THING PROMISED IN LIFE IS DEATH
I'M GOING HARD TILL THIS REAL NIGGAS DEAD
DAUGHTER TURN GROWN WHEN
I WAS IN THE PEN
BROUGHT TEARS TO MY EYES
BUT I NEVER LET THEM SHED"**

- 'SICKMADE'



handful of notable names from Birmingham like C4 and Lady Leshurr establishing themselves in the London scene.

With such a heavy focus on London, for MCs outside of the capital, it's a frustrating task to break through, which many face and many fail. MiST is the biggest success story we've seen in years. Beginning as a grime artist, he gained popularity, but it was limited to his community. Working within a predominantly London-based music genre, as a Birmingham MC MiST struggled to break into the scene. Having grown up in a cultural melting pot with a diverse array of cultures living amongst the community, MiST began to represent a group that no one else was speaking for. Birmingham has a strong Caribbean community and MiST grew up within that culture, being raised in a Jamaican household. But as he grew up, he began to mix with the other Birmingham cultures that surrounded him, mostly white and asian.

Growing up amongst many Asian friends, MiST naturally began to pick up the lingo they would use. You can still hear Punjabi words in MiST's music today, as it's evident that the culture has had a strong influence on his life growing up. Many listeners were unaware of the meaning when he spat, "Hold tight all my apnas, karlas, gouras," Punjabi words, referring to asians, blacks and whites. Though, fairly simple in concept, the inclusiveness he showed to Birmingham's communities in those lyrics is profound. Even Antony Joshua tweeted the words back in December 2016, adding "Back With A Bang." It's this cultural understanding that MiST promotes that has the UK riding for him. He's the first black artist in our rap scene to truly intwine such cultures in this way and it's just one of the reasons he is appreciated by such a wide audience. So uniquely British, you can imagine overseas listeners getting lost in his cultural references, calling himself the "Black Max Branning" to gas up all the Eastenders fans. The Brits love him for it though, as he weaves UK Garage samples courtesy of Steel Banglez around gritty lyrics. Only those truly in tune with British culture can understand the huge significance of MiST and what he's doing for cultural understanding.

The Brummie rapper is notorious for his music videos, each release being more epic than the previous visual. At the 2017 MOBO Awards, MiST won best music video for his wild 'Hot Property' visuals, which saw him climb down a ladder from a helicopter and jump on a husky sled. I asked him about whether there's more music videos from the 'Diamonds in the Dirt' project on the way. Taking a shot of Patron, he laughed, saying, ''Well, of course, we're gonna drop more visuals. Then I'm gonna release a bit more from the EP just to shine more light on that and then probably give them a few surprises. I'm not gonna let off too much about what I'm gonna do but be ready.'' The grin on his face suggests he's been plotting power moves and is ready to see them come to life.

While it goes without saying that London remains the hub for UK rap and hip hop, recently we've seen a rise in successful artists from cities outside the capital. Birmingham is a clear leader in the movement, Lady Leshurr has been carrying the Birmingham flag for years now but recently we've seen artists like Lotto Boyz and JayKae step up. However, MiST has taken the movement to a whole new level, putting his city firmly on the map. I remark that he should be proud of what he's done for his city and how himself and the other artists have put the Birmingham scene on a different pedestal. He agrees, saying the ''Birmingham scene's popping, we're now actually on the map.'' Showing his pure humility, MiST follows on with, "We're ringing bells, I'm delighted to be apart of it. For you to even say I'm up there with Lady Leshurr, I feel very honoured. For people to actually recognise the work that we're doing." It's evident that the position he's in today came from hard work and persistence.

Nothing seems too serious for MiST; though he's a man that's been through a lot, he still finds a way to laugh through everything. His music stems from hardship but preaches such a positive and uplifting message. Sonically the roots of MiST's music are from UK Garage, with the bounce and high pitch-shifted vocal samples creating a happy energy that's impossible to not dance to. East London native Steel Banglez has created the majority of his biggest hits, the two have a chemistry together that cannot be disputed. If Steel Banglez and MiST are creating a song together there's a 99% chance that it's going to be a banger. Asking MiST what his creative process is like when he is working with Steel Banglez, he reveals, ''We start everything from scratch, beats and bars. Writing inspiration comes from lifestyle, past and present; and what I want to have in the future. It's basically lifestyle, so everyone can relate." Being so relatable is what helps MIST stand out from his music. He says exactly how he's feeling and never sugar coats it for anyone. He speaks about his best times and the moments of heartbreak, showing listeners that no matter what, there's a way out.

MiST's story is inspirational to anyone that truly understands where he's come from. His rags to riches come up has shown people that perseverance beats everything. MiST has stayed true to himself whilst finding a way to get him and his team out of whatever negative situations they grew from. He's a leader and one that's sure to have a rich career. As UK rap and hip hop continue to rise, MiST's audience will grow. On his most recent tour, he had a sold-out performance in Manchester, which just proves that the man is on a mission and the people are supporting it.

@tweet_mist
mistofficial.com

STYLING BY KASHMIR WICKHAM
CLOTHING BY UNKNOWN



> "IT'S THIS MISCONCEPTION THAT RUNS DEEP IN HIP HOP DISCOURSE, AND BY EXTENSION, THAT OF RACE ITSELF; THE FAILURE BY WHITE PEOPLE TO ACKNOWLEDGE WE ARE TALKING ABOUT TWO DIFFERENT SETS OF RULES"

THE ROAD TO INDEPENDENCE

HOW THE PURSUIT OF MONEY MADE HIP HOP THE DOMINANT CULTURAL FORCE IN AMERICA.

ILLUSTRATIONS BY HAYLEY WALL
WORDS BY CHRISTOPHER RILEY

One mile north of downtown Atlanta sits Piedmont Park. Spread across 187 acres of land, it has tennis courts, impressive views of the city skyline, even its own lake and farmers market. Hardly Gucci Mane's Atlanta, more the sort of place that epitomises middle-class America. Clean, pretty, safe – white. When the park started to look a bit run-down in the mid-late twentieth century, $23 million in private money was raised to stop it becoming an eye sore. Other areas of the city haven't been so lucky. Drive a half hour south on the I 75 and you'll arrive at Forest Park – with a largely black population and a poverty rate above 30%, it's reportedly the most dangerous suburb in Atlanta. The two extremes, rich and poor – white and black – live side by side.

It was in Piedmont Park, in 1895, that Booker T Washington gave his famous 'Atlanta Compromise'. Slavery may have ended thirty years before, but the Jim Crow laws and growth of the KKK made sure black people stayed firmly in their place – with difficulty voting and little access to jobs, often with a noose tied around their necks. Washington, a prominent Southern black leader, wanted an end to the lynchings, setting out his vision for how whites and blacks could peacefully coexist. He told the predominantly white crowd: if you will stop killing us, we can work for you, contribute to society and help build the economy. Together, blacks and whites can bring to the South, "a new heaven and a new earth." He urged blacks to promote business and entrepreneurship above political protest. Start small, work hard, make money. His message to whites – if you give us access to education and jobs we will work for you, harder than anyone.

In some ways it's like a capitalist call to arms. 'Work hard and you will succeed!' In other ways it's the bleak but pragmatic reality that still resonates for black people in America today: because of the inequality you face, you will have to work twice as hard. And as hard as you work you will still only be looking in on a society and an economy that isn't fully yours. Hardly the same inspiring rhetoric as Martin Luther King's address, but the 'Atlanta Compromise' was exactly that – a compromise. Asking for an end to economic segregation while in turn letting whites keep political segregation. White supremacy gets to save face and black people can have jobs and buy food for their family. A win-win, it seemed.

This marriage of convenience pretty much set the tone for twentieth century American society and its distribution of wealth, with whites out-earning blacks every step of the way. All living under capitalism, just two very different versions of it; one Piedmont Park and one Forest Park. As Washington told his people, they would have to work a hell of a lot harder, just to make do, because the odds were stacked against them. The writer, Ta-Nahesi Coates says the same thing even today: "[true equality] will mean black people will have the right to be as mediocre as white people." Mediocrity is a benefit of white privilege – black people have had to aim higher.

Washington's address also helps us make sense of hip hop and its ongoing love affair with money. Not only has the desire to get rich been a recurring theme in hip hop culture, it's also one of the many things used by white commentators to bash the culture – its artists accused of being materialistic, shallow, crass. There are more things in life than money, we're told. And yes, that is absolutely true – if you have it in the first place. It's this misconception that runs deep in hip hop discourse, and by extension, that of race itself; the failure by white people to acknowledge we are talking about two different sets of rules. For the comfy white middle class, talking about money is a sign of poor taste. It's uncouth. You don't need to show your money, you simply have it. It's a cultural right. When your park starts to look overgrown, one million dollars in support will appear to ensure it looks pristine. To be black, on the other hand, your position in America is more precarious. To have money, is not a right but a goal. An obsession. Acquiring it is a means of penetrating mainstream society – a way of being seen and heard. I have money, therefore I exist.

So to the next question – how to get your money? If, as Washington explains, the odds are so stacked against blacks, how were they going to make enough money to achieve any level of comfort and happiness? Music and sport have long been a few options. This, of course, exposing the irony that is white supremacy – white people may love to hate their black brothers and sisters but they're also kinda obsessed with them. Like an unwritten agreement – a compromise – they've been allowed to cash in on this; white America will watch their games, buy their albums, even call them Kings – but this is limited to the court or the booth.

Being good at music or playing football has therefore given black people some capital with which to advance in society. A foot in the door. With hip hop, this moment came with the release of Sugarhill Gang's 'Rapper's Delight', an event that turned an underground movement into a hugely popular money-making machine. Taking the music out of Bronx house parties and into the mainstream birthed a movement that whites would quickly come to love – consuming the music, language and trends like addicts.

But who was, and is, actually making money from it? Like, the real money – the lion's share of the $10 billion a year it now generates? For much of the early years it was how Washington had envisioned it: black artists getting paid for their hard work by white label execs who kept them at an arm's length, control safely in the hands of the white-run record labels. Huge advances were paid; the illusion of wealth was there.

Then the Roc changed the game. Jay Z, Dame Dash and fellow co-founder, Kareem 'Biggs' Burke, partnered with Def Jam in 1997 to create their own independent label Roc-a-fella. Moving the focus away from hip hop, their approach altered how business in the rap

industry was done. While music was still the platform, there were other, often more lucrative ways of making money. In his book, Decoded, Jay writes, "Our ambition was never to just fit into the corporate mould, it was to take it over and remake that world in our image." And it's here we start to see hip hop free itself from white America, the economic-social landscape of Washington's America starting to evaporate.

Roc-a-fella operated like its own ecosystem. At the centre you had Jay and all the fame and notoriety that his rap success brought. That would be the fuel to propel the brand. Then the rap money would enable him, Dame and Biggs to diversify – moving beyond selling records into fashion, alcohol, films and other ventures in a way that hadn't been done before. They weren't just selling music, they were selling a lifestyle. Yes, sponsorship deals had already been a thing – Run DMC partnering with Adidas in 1986, for example – but the artists were often paid an outright fee, not as part of a joint venture, remaining separate, coexisting only for a business deal. In early-nineties Jay Z, we had the beginnings of the rapper-entrepreneur, seeking ownership of his art and his business. During the '00s he partnered with everyone from Reebok and Hewlett-Packard to Coca-Cola and Budweiser, setting hip hop on course to embed itself into the real wealth of America. As Jay Z's success continued to rise following the release of albums like 'Reasonable Doubt', 'The Blueprint' and 'The Black Album', combined with the growing popularity of hip hop in general, he and other artists became very real and credible financial forces. After all, he wasn't a "businessman" but a "business, man."

This shift has since helped restructure the power dynamic between hip hop and mainstream society. Just as Washington's black audience were encouraged to work hard and be grateful for their freedom, early hip hop artists were told to be happy with their small slice of the pie; as if they should be grateful for being allowed to monetise their own culture. Jay-Z showed this didn't have to be the case. When the luxury champagne brand, Cristal, implied they didn't want the support of the rap world, Jay encouraged a boycott – if white America doesn't like us then fuck 'em, he said. Hip hop was starting to go its own way, no longer clamouring for the support of white America and instead realising it had the cultural power to create its own rules.

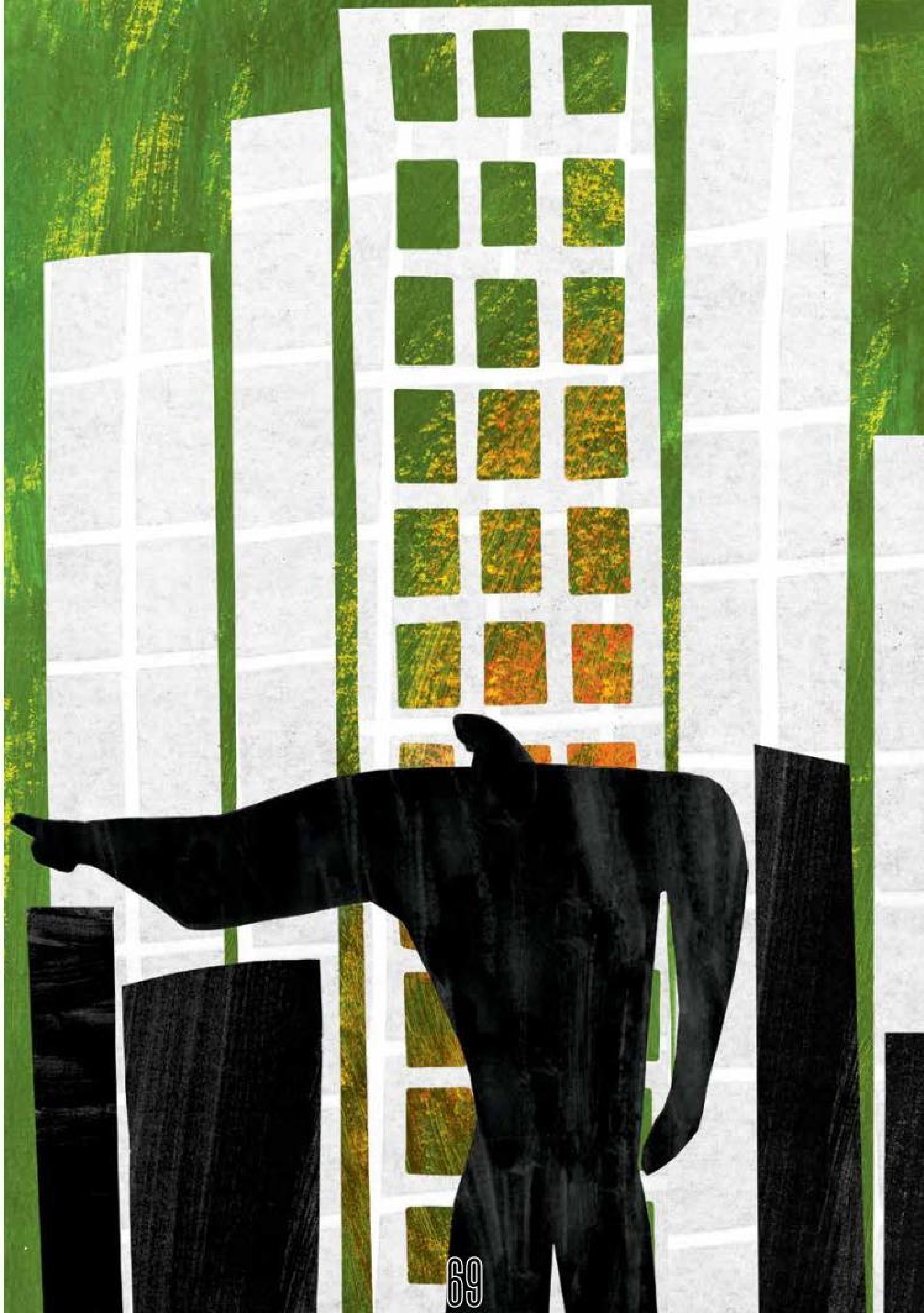
Now, in the era of independent artists, this idea is commonplace. Chance the Rapper has told us how labels are terrified of his independence and the example it sets for others. "If one more label try to stop me, it's gon' be some dread head n****s in your lobby," he raps on 'No Problem'. The message is clear: labels can no longer extort us. This is our culture. And our money.

No one embodies this mindset more than Nipsey Hussle. Labeled an underachiever by Complex in 2013, he's long divided opinions. It's only now, with the release of 'Victory Lap', he's being widely embraced by the culture. And this is because we haven't been able to figure him out – west coast gangster rapper, underground star or music mogul? In 2013 he made 1000 hard copies of his mixtape 'Crenshaw' and sold them for $1000. What appeared a bizarre publicity stunt turned into a shrewd business move – all 1000 copies were sold in one day, including 100 to Jay-Z, painting Nipsey as anything but a 'traditional' rapper. The name for his clothing line, Marathon Clothing, pays homage to this desire to be different – in a bid to protect his brand (and his money) Nipsey is willing to play the long game. He's since created co-working spaces for select businesses in South LA as well as a line of smart stores, an innovative new concept blending a conventional brick and mortar store with an online shopping place.

Faced with the prospect of suffering at the bottom of society's pecking order, rappers like Nipsey have become ruthless businessman. And with the recent news that Diddy, Dr Dre and Jay Z are now the richest people in American music – not just hip hop – this idea has surely reached its natural conclusion. This proves that even today where race relations appear to have regressed ten years with the continued rise of police brutality and alarming racial prejudice of the president, hip-hop continues to make money. And lots of it.

As a result hip hop is now more an arena of business than simply an art form. Even the buzz word of today's era – culture – demonstrates this evolution: it's about more than music. This is why people like the entrepreneur and early Twitter investor Gary Vaynerchuk are now gravitating towards hip hop – it is no longer on the fringes of society but is dictating the social landscape. Or as Vaynerchuk put it in a recent discussion with A Boogie Wit Da Hoodie: "hip hop rules the world." And he's not wrong – with more and more ways of making money, the time for compromise is no longer.

"JUST AS WASHINGTON'S BLACK AUDIENCE WERE ENCOURAGED TO WORK HARD AND BE GRATEFUL FOR THEIR FREEDOM, EARLY HIP HOP ARTISTS WERE TOLD TO BE HAPPY WITH THEIR SMALL SLICE OF THE PIE; AS IF THEY SHOULD BE GRATEFUL FOR BEING ALLOWED TO MONETISE THEIR OWN CULTURE"





TRIPPIE REDD: THE WONDER KIDD

PHOTOS BY DUNCAN TELFORD
WORDS BY DYLAN AROLOYE

THE WONDER-KID PHENOMENON THAT HAS STUNNED PEOPLE FOR YEARS; YOU KNOW THOSE UNDERAGED, HIGH ACHIEVING INDIVIDUALS - CHILD PRODIGIES IF YOU WILL. MANY WOULD PUT 18-YEAR-OLD TRIPPIE REDD INTO THAT CATEGORY. BORN IN THE SUMMER OF 1999, TRIPPIE REDD IS ONE OF THE LEADERS OF THE YOUTH IN HIP HOP AND ONE OF THE YOUNGEST TO ENTER THE GAME SINCE JOEY BADA$$ DID SOME FIVE YEARS BEFORE. NOW AT THE TENDER AGE OF 18, TRIPPIE IS EIGHT PROJECTS DEEP AND 424TH IN THE WORLD ON SPOTIFY'S MONTHLY LISTENERS. WELL ON THE PATH TO GLOBAL DOMINATION, HE CONFIRMS THAT AGE AIN'T NOTHING BUT A NUMBER AS HE SHOWS THE INDUSTRY HE'S A FORCE TO BE RECKONED WITH.

"IT'S ALWAYS GOOD TO GET IN PEOPLE'S FACES BEFORE YOU TURN 18. A YOUNG PERSON OUT HERE GRINDING ON HIS OWN IS KINDA LIKE A GREAT IMAGE, I DIDN'T WANNA BE ONE OF THOSE GUYS THAT WAITED 'TIL I'M 21 TO TRY AND BECOME SOMETHING"

Before speaking with him, my first impression was honestly a little judgemental. I made the assumption that based on the colour of his hair, his face tattoos, his age and the type of music he makes, he was going to be an immature, overly excited kid who's managed to cultivate a following by making "turn up music." I was completely wrong. Within the first few minutes of our conversation, it was evident why he's already so established in the music industry. Speaking in a mature, eloquent and passionate way about what he's doing, Trippie Redd is a young maven that's taken a very calculated approach when it comes to becoming a global artist. Following his first shows in Europe, he announced his signing to Quality Control Management, the home of Migos, Lil Yachty, Cardi B and more.

Trippie Redd was born and raised in Canton, Ohio, a state that's definitely not seen as a music capital. Trippie took it on himself to break out of his hometown and at the age of 15, he'd identified that in order to really take his music somewhere, he'd need to go to places where the music scene was thriving. At this time the Atlanta music scene was blowing up; 2015 saw Rich Homie Quan drop 'Flex (Ooh, Ooh, Ooh)' now double platinum, Future and Drake blessed us with the 'What A Time To Be Alive' mixtape, plus the platinum 'March Madness' by Future. Young Thug gave us 'Slime Season' with the platinum single, 'Best Friend'. With all this music coming out of one city in Georgia, Redd moved there in search of opportunity. His independence at this age was the turning point in his career. When asked whether he'd always been so independent, he replies, "It's always good to get in people's faces before you turn 18. A young person out here grinding on his own is kinda like a great image, I didn't wanna be one of those guys that waited 'til I'm 21 to try and become something." The hunger and determination Redd's shown from a young age is admirable, risking everything in the hope that it will grant him an opportunity to advance in his career.

Redd went on to say he feels like people make the mistake of dragging out their youth and capitalising on the opportunities we're given when we're young. A lot of creatives wait until they are older out of fear of being too young, or not being good enough. Redd went against all of these common fears and is now selling out shows globally. On his first time coming to the UK to perform, his show sold out in 11 minutes, forcing promoters to add another show because of the high demand for tickets. Ohio's wonder kid is taking the world by storm with his no- holds-barred approach. Having moved to Atlanta, Redd felt like the next step was to move to LA, so at 16 years old he packed up, left Atlanta and jetted to the west coast. Moving with just his DJ and a friend from Ohio, he soon met up with Lil Twist at Mally Mall's residence and from that point, decided to stay out in LA by himself. He spent the time connecting with everyone and anyone in order to build a name for himself. In 2017, he released 'A Love Letter To You', the first of a two part series in which he openly spoke on love and the emotions that come with it. The breakout track, 'Love Scars' saw him play-listed on

BLACK & RED POLO SHIRT BY ALEXANDER MCQUEEN
BAG BY LOUIS VUITTON
SHOES BY BALENCIAGA



Apple Music's radio station Beats1, among many other stations. Shockingly, the track was recorded just once, "I actually one-took that whole song, one take! I didn't even need to do it more than once. I was gonna change it but [my team] stopped me. I'm glad they did"

Redd's music career started while in high school in Ohio. When asked whether he was a good student, he responds, "I had my share of time getting in trouble, but every time I got in trouble I would finish my work. If I got suspended, I would take the time - like the first day of suspension - to do all the work that I got suspended for. Then the whole suspension, I'd have time off school where I was just chilling, vibing out playing new games, making music." Redd didn't take the punishment as a negative, instead seeking inspiration in a similar way to how Chance the Rapper utilised his school suspension to create his '10 Day' mixtape. As we get into the discussion of education, I ask him whether he'd like to go to college. Redd's initial response is, "I might go, but right now I'm trying to finish off this work. Music is work to me and I feel like I'm not where I need to be at yet, as far as money and music and goals wise. So after I get done finishing my goals on music, of course I'll go to college." Redd's focus is unmatched amongst his peers, he not only understands that music is a great source of income for his life right now but he has plans to do more than the music and broaden his revenue streams. Though if he did go to college his major would likely be in, "game-testing [software engineering], you know how people go to college to learn different shit with software like as far as computer work? I'd like to learn how people make video games."

Aesthetically, Redd's image is vivid, which translates into his visuals, some of the most creative in today's rap climate. From the very gothic, 'Romeo and Juliet' to the kaleidoscopic 'Love Scars', Redd's videos never disappoint from a creative standpoint. Recently he teamed up with Travis Scott to create a visual part zombie apocalypse, part horror movie for their collaboration, 'Dark Knight Dummo'. When asked how he went about creating the video, he explains, "I love movies, I think my music videos should just be movies from now on. Just good concepts, maybe even like concepts from movies. I usually come up with all the ideas for my videos. The one with Travis, him, the cameraman and I came up with the concept together, like we all had our fair share in it. It was shot by the guy that shoots Kanye's and he shoots movies, like real movies. It was kinda hard to work with him but it was cool. But I co-direct almost all my videos, I give my cameraman the idea and then he brings it to life." With him showing such passion towards watching movies, as well as creating them, I ask whether he'd eventually get into creating movies. He replies enthusiastically, "Heck yeah!" As I wonder whether such a creative individual had anything in the pipelines already, such as scripts or films already written, he tells me, "Right now I'm working on my album. As I'm working on it, I'm tryna make movies for the videos I'm doing, like little music movies for the videos. After that, I'm gonna be focusing on other stuff, I'm really into anime, so I want to make my own anime. I'm really into that shit too. I don't really have a favourite I just love anime so I watch all the shit. The ones I've been watching are like Akame ga Kill!, I watch Samurai Hack, I know it's not really an anime but it kinda is. One-Punch Man, Mob Psycho 100, I been watching One Piece. My favourite, as a matter of fact, is Inuyasha."

Evidently, movies and TV shows are the areas he draws most inspiration from both forms of creative visuals. I could feel his face lighting up as I began to speak about anime so I then decided to ask him about video games. Although he is very mature and super business savvy for his age, he's 18 years old with a natural love for video games. Following our conversation about software engineering we discuss his desire to create video games in the future with Redd stating, "Yeah I would design my own video games, probably dark [ones]. It'd be dark but fun." When asked if he'd turn himself into a character, he laughs, "Of course, gotta promote the brand! I'd definitely be one of the characters." His music video 'Hellboy' comes to mind, in which Redd portrays a samurai-type figure killing a bunch of demons in a dark underworld. Though not technically a full video game, Redd's evidently been thinking of innovative ideas to merge with his music.

PAINTWORK JACKET + TROUSERS BY ALIVE & MORE
WHITE JACKET BY UNKNOWN LONDON
SLIDERS BY GUCCI
TACTICAL HOLSTER + VEST BY BAADER-MEINHOF BY EZEKIEL AKINNEWU



"I ACTUALLY ONE-TOOK ['LOVE SCARS'], ONE TAKE! I DIDN'T EVEN NEED TO DO IT MORE THAN ONCE. I WAS GONNA CHANGE IT BUT [MY TEAM] STOPPED ME. I'M GLAD THEY DID"



"RIGHT NOW I'M WORKING ON MY ALBUM. AS I'M WORKING ON IT, I'M TRYNA MAKE MOVIES FOR THE VIDEOS I'M DOING, LIKE LITTLE MUSIC MOVIES FOR THE VIDEOS"

Despite his young age, Redd's fan base contains many twenty and thirty-somethings that admire his relentless work rate. His level of maturity and dedication to a craft isn't easy in any field of work and Redd deserves a lot more respect for how well he's done at just 18. When asked if he has any advice for kids his age or older that are looking to make it, he confesses, "I try to not speak on that because it's really hard to explain, but I will say if you do work hard and you really put in that work, this shit takes time man! Four years to be able to get to where I am, you know what I'm saying? You have to travel, get in these people's faces and show them more than anything; Learn about the industry and learn people. To get to this level or this status, you gotta really pay homage and listen and acknowledge the game, then you'll become a player eventually." Hearing Redd say this, it clicked that he's the modern day example of what a student to the game looks like. Someone who's come into the game to learn and grow, "pay homage" and become not only better but wiser every day.

Many have dismissed Redd as a mumble rapper, despite him proving his rap skills with songs like 'Hellboy' and 'Can You Rap Like Me' but he doesn't take offence to the term, stating "I like being versatile and making music." The rapper's influences are very diverse, as he demonstrates, singing rock melodies on trap beats. He can serve straight turn-up vibes, then flip into poignant lyrical raps. You can't put Redd in a box because his sound flits between so many different genres. His whole persona and energy are that of a rock star, which comes from his wide range of influences in metal and rock music. Before we wrap the interview, Redd speaks on "Music that [he] can feel," talking about the Deftones, the alternative metal band from California. Calling the Deftones' 'Pink Maggit' one of his favourite songs ever, he went on to elaborate with the album, 'White Pony' and how the band "really changed in this era too. I listened to a lot of their other albums and they really went like full metal but like this one had more of like a softer, RnB vibe. It was just different, I don't even consider it heavy metal, rock, it's on some alternative sick shit."

After getting to know Redd and understanding his thought process, I left the chat with a better understanding of what a student to music looks like in 2018. He may be young, but his wisdom and conviction push him well ahead of his years. He's shown he's not afraid to control his own destiny and has big planner the future with dreams beyond music, of creating movies and video games. This self-proclaimed rockstar has made huge waves in the music industry and plans to dominate music and the world for years to come. Take it from us, Trippie Redd is definitely one to watch.

@trippieredd
trippieredd.com

HOCKEY JERSEY BY PLAYDOT APPAREL
BAG BY LOUIS VUITTON

STYLING BY JAMES LOACH
STYLIST'S ASSISTANTS:
SAM BROWN + TOMMY GAMBRILL




21
SAVAGE



21 SAVAGE

PHOTOS BY MIKE MILLER
WORDS BY DARIUS PLEASANT

21 SAVAGE IS FOR THE CHILDREN.

WITH A HIT SONG LIKE 'BANK ACCOUNT', 21 SAVAGE IS THE PERFECT COVER STAR FOR THE GET MONEY ISSUE OF VIPER. HAVING AGGRESSIVELY WORKED HIS WAY FROM THE STREETS OF ATLANTA TO THE TOP OF THE BILLBOARD HOT 100 CHARTS, SEVERAL TIMES IN FACT, HIS SUCCESS ALONE CONFIRMS HIS STATUS AS A STAR. HOWEVER, ON HIS JOURNEY TO THE TOP, 21 SAVAGE HAS EVOLVED NOT JUST LYRICALLY, BUT IN PHILANTHROPIC WAYS TOO. IN LIGHT OF HIS PAST, 21 IS MAKING MOVES TO IMPROVE THE LIVES OF THE YOUTH. HE CAN BE PRETTY CONSERVATIVE WITH WORDS AND WHEN WE MEET HIM, WE FIND OUT HE'S DEFINITELY NOT ONE TO GIVE MUCH AWAY. EVEN HIS PRESS AGENT NOTES, "HE'S A MAN OF FEW WORDS." SO JOIN US AS WE EXPLORE THE RAPID EVOLUTION OF ONE OF ATLANTA'S BIGGEST RAP STARS...

CUSTOM YSL SHIRT BY DR GUCCENSTEIN
PANTS BY ADIDAS ORIGINALS
SHOES BY ADIDAS ORIGINALS
VINTAGE VERSACE GLASSES BY
GALLERIA DE FRESCO

First appearing on the scene in 2013, it wasn't until 2015 that 21 Savage dropped his debut single, 'Picky'. The track's chorus sees him boast that he's "young, dumb and reckless," a claim made in response to having just bought an $80,000 piece of jewellery. Fast forward five years and he's matured into a globally famous musician, with two RIAA-certified gold projects and countless platinum singles. Though you could credit Future's appearance for the exposure, the success had more to do with the chemistry between 21 and his go-to producer, who some would call the father of the new Atlanta trap scene; the incomparable Metro Boomin.

Believing he does his best work when working with just one producer, he says, "Ain't nothing wrong with multiple producers but if I could, I would [make music] with one because that gives them the chance to give the production their all." He added, "they're going to be more motivated to go harder on your project and won't do that if there are 30 other producers on the album."

Savage has established himself in the commercial rap world, appearing on chart-topping singles like Post Malone's 'Rockstar' and Drake's 'Sneakin''. However, it's on his own projects that 21 shines the brightest. His mixtapes, specifically 'Slaughter Tape', 'Savage Mode' and 'Slaughter King', were definitive of the trap scene's rebirth around 2012. Though he wasn't the only catalyst, his solo tapes quite succinctly proved that 21's music packed a punch.

His best work is with the hometown collaborators that know him best. His first mixtape, 'Free Guwop', released in 2015, was almost exclusively produced by Sonny Digital. However it was 21's mixtape with Metro Boomin, 'Savage Mode', released a year later, that introduced him to the world. The only feature came from Future on 'X', arguably one of the most addictive songs on the tape. Saying that, 21 is most competent on his own and the mixtape's title track is proof of that. In 2017, the duo followed up 'Savage Mode' with 'Without Warning' also featuring Offset, plus Quavo on one track. The presence of members of fellow Atlanta-bred, Migos, served to clarify their roles of Migos, Metro and Savage as Trap's young holy trinity.

As a new school rapper, 21 has been criticised for a lack of lyricism, with some claiming he's not worthy of the title of a "real" hip hop artist. But 21's attitude towards his lyrics and the genre of hip hop itself, make him one of the most genuine rappers around. What does it even mean to be a "real" hip hop artist in today's era? Addressing the basic definition of the word, being "real" is something that 21 Savage says a lot of rappers from Atlanta are not. "I know they're definitely not like me because a lot of them lie [about their lifestyle]." 21 is the real deal, and he knows it. He reiterates this in the lyrics of 'No Heart' saying, "I'm a real street nigga, bitch. I am not one of these niggas bangin' on wax." The hook of the song also sees him answer his own question when he spits, "Why you pullin' all these rappers' cards? 'Cause these niggas pussy and I'm hard."

Many OG's would say that the only thing a man owns is his word, and 21's reserved nature allows him to protect it. Even in his music, the rapper is concise, his lyrics totally free of excess. Producer Zaytoven believes this trait is what makes 21 stand out, "A lot of times artists rap with a whole lot of words and metaphors – to simplify it and say all that you are trying to say in a few phrases is a gift." Now 21 may just be hesitant to keep some things to himself, but the Slaughter Gang rapper was still generous enough to share some of his own gems with us. Hailing from the home of Trap music, Savage is clearly influenced by his predecessors, but also many West Coast gangsta rap icons. "I listen to everybody," says 21 when asked about his favourites, "YG, Nipsey [Hussle], but back in the day it was N.W.A., Snoop Dogg, Dr. Dre, Too Short, E-40, Digital Underground, 2Pac."

One of the worst stereotypes towards hip hop artists is their supposed inability to manage their money. In contrast, 21 Savage rapped on 'Darth Vader' about holding on to funds, with lines assuring listeners that his property is owned, not leased. He dropped lines about lavish business meetings with his accountant at a Ruth Chris steakhouse on his 'Cocky' verse. Comically on 'Savage Mode', he even mentioned falling asleep in classes unless they involved counting numbers. The real gem came when he stated he owns his own master recordings, something many rappers underestimate the importance of.

When it comes to stressing the importance of money, old heads like Wu-Tang have been at the top of the game. Even though it was based in humour, Wu-Tang Financial offered a non-traditional introduction to the conversation on financial assistance. RZA and GZA's appearance in

"I AM A REAL TRAPPER FROM THE STREETS, SO THAT'S JUST NATURAL. I DON'T REALLY LOOK AT IT LIKE 'MAKING TRAP MUSIC' BECAUSE I MAKE 21 SAVAGE MUSIC ABOUT 21 SAVAGE'S LIFE"

TRACKSUIT BY GENTRY GARB
SHOES BY ADIDAS ORIGINALS





the Chappelle Show skit was important. It's not that the skit wasn't hilarious, it was, but it also helped to start a crucial conversation within communities of colour: one of financial security. Fellow Clan member, Ghostface Killah - who co-incidentally Savage once named a song after - recently established his own cryptocurrency, C.R.E.A.M Capitol, which intends to "make cryptocurrencies more accessible to the general public than ever before." Though 21 Savage may not be in the same vein of hip hop as Wu-Tang, their focus on making money and investing it is something that 21 can clearly relate to. "The most important lesson is not to blow it," he says as he ponders his financial success; 21 Savage may be "having fun" when making music, but he's very serious when it comes to his money.

His ability and desire to give back to those less fortunate makes his money management even more remarkable. 21 Savage has worked hard for all of what he's earned. Being a rapper is laborious work, and it's nice to let your success shine. but in many cases, the word shine is taken quite literally and invested in a choker chain dripping in diamonds. Savage has proven time and time again that making money is important, but helping others to do the same is even more important.

When Savage's debut, 'Issa Album', charted at number two on the Billboard Hot 100, he began to expand on commercial success in order to create monetary opportunities for those in need. A lot of people didn't think Savage would come as far as he has, but he's never doubted himself. In regards to the success of his album, he admits he knew "they were already fucking with me." Born Shayaa Bin Abraham-Joseph in Atlanta in 1992, to a single mother from the Caribbean island of Dominica, growing up was hard for the family. It was this start that taught 21 the importance of money and how to make it.

Raised amidst the violence in Atlanta, 21 was no stranger to the roughness of the streets. He rapped about losing friends to gang violence on 'Twenty1', and has even boasted of his inability to leave the streets alone on 'One Foot'. His life has not been easy and that shows in his music. "I am a real trapper from the streets, so that's just natural" he says in response to the violent content of his lyrics. On his 21st birthday, Savage was shot six times, with his best friend passing away from his injuries. This turning point forced the rapper to take music seriously, seeing his survival as sign.

If you were to ask 21 where he sees himself in the future, he'd give an answer that you'd expect from any other 25 year old rapper, "rich as hell!" However 21 has a desire to help out those in need, so they can have what he didn't growing up. It's no surprise that the rapper's biggest accomplishment thus far is his "bank savings." Since he first started to generate buzz in 2013, 21 is closer to his goal too, partly by paying his dues and providing feature verses for other artists.

Being a rapper in today's postmodern era doesn't even necessarily restrict him to the genre of "hip hop," or even "trap" for that matter. With the introduction of "trap rap," and the meshing of different genres together, the previous categorisations that many rappers used to face no longer matter. Savage doesn't even consider himself to be a "trap" artist, or even a "hip hop" artist for that matter. "I don't really look at it like 'making trap music' because I make 21 Savage music about 21 Savage's life" he says. Just because Savage typically raps over "trap" beats, it doesn't make him simply a "trap" rapper.

Whatever box people try and put 21 Savage in, it's important that, while living the lifestyle of a "trap" rapper, he maintains clarity with discipline, Remaining focused in your personal life is something that 21 Savage knows well, but it's also something that he tries to separate from his music. Savage grew up practicing Ifá with his mother. Known for its intense spiritual nature, in Savage's own words, the Yoruba religion "is serious." Ifá has influenced how Savage lives his life, with him saying, "It does have a lot to do with the way I carry myself and treat other people, but as far as music that's just me having fun."

Since dropping his first single three years ago, 21's music has definitely evolved past just "having fun." Not only has he become more fiscally successful and aware, but his lyrics have seen him reflect on social issues. On his debut album, Savage raps about police brutality and even inequality within the incarceration system. Clearly, he's come a long way since releasing 'Picky' but to anyone claiming that he's become more political in his lyrics, 21 would simply say that it's not that serious; "I was

"AIN'T NOTHING WRONG WITH MULTIPLE PRODUCERS BUT IF I COULD, I WOULD [MAKE MUSIC] WITH ONE BECAUSE THAT GIVES THEM THE CHANCE TO GIVE THE PRODUCTION THEIR ALL. THEY'RE GOING TO BE MORE MOTIVATED TO GO HARDER ON YOUR PROJECT AND WON'T DO THAT IF THERE ARE 30 OTHER PRODUCERS ON THE ALBUM"

CUSTOM GUCCI SHIRT BY DR GUCCENSTEIN
PANTS BY MINT CREW
SHOES BY ADIDAS ORIGINALS



“THE MOST IMPORTANT LESSON IS NOT TO BLOW IT. I BELIEVE IN INVESTING IN THE RIGHT STUFF, BUT I AIN'T GONNA TELL ANYBODY BECAUSE THEY'RE GONNA TRY AND COPY ME”

just talking about what was going on at that moment in time." That doesn't make the work he's doing any less significant.

His favourite song from 'Issa Album' happens to be 'Nothin New', a song in which he address many of the political issues that have occurred within the United States during the past three years. Though he staunchly opposes a 'political' label, 21 must undeniably deal with a justice system which can be oppressive to people who look like him, but he has developed his own opinions about that. In response to the people who he claims hate the police for the sake of hating the police, 21 says, "I don't promote all the people who are mad at the police for no reason… A police officer's job is to arrest criminals. If you standing in the hood and you know it's a heavy drug area and get locked up then you can't be mad the police, but the innocent killings aren't right." By his own standards, 21 Savage's music may not be overtly political, but maybe that's because his music is not the only representation of his life.

In March, Savage appeared on Ellen DeGeneres' show, announcing the launch of a new initiative to teach children about money management. He kicked off the fund, presenting a check for $21,000. In short, the rapper was donating $1,000 to 21 soon-to-be-selected teenagers, with the intent of helping them start their own bank accounts, something that Savage did not have as a child. Speaking on the fund he said, "It's ironic because growing up in Atlanta, I knew almost nothing about bank accounts, now that I do have money in my bank account, I want to help kids with a background similar to mine to get smart about their money."

In a world where hip hop artists are criticised for a variety of arbitrary reasons, it's great to see rappers like 21 Savage helping to pave the way for the youth. Giving away his money to the kids, with the intent of showing them how to save their own money, can only help Savage, and he knows that: "I believe in investing in the right stuff, but I ain't going to tell anybody because they are going to try and copy me," he says towards the end of our interview. By trying to keep his investments a secret, 21 Savage might be, again, making a clever move, but if other rappers were to try and take his lead, and start investing in the youth, that might not be such a bad idea.

@21savage
21savage.com

TRACKSUIT BY GENTRY GARB
SHOES BY ADIDAS ORIGINALS

PHOTOGRAPHER: MIKE MILLER
CREATIVE DIRECTOR: SHANNON MILLER
STYLIST: MARKO THE CURATOR

HEATWAVE CAR CLUB BRO: RALAZTIAN
STUDIO: ROBERT GRAHAM STUDIO



Costa Rica

JACKET: MUSS MUSS
TOP: NIKE
JEWELLERY: SÓLIDA



COSTUME VEST: MUSS MUSS
BIKE SHORTS: NIKE
SOCKS: MODELS OWN
SHOES: AIR JORDAN 1 SEASON OF HER
JEWELRY: SÓLIDA





DURAG TOP: STYLISTS OWN
PANTS: ARMY SURPLUS
SHOES: AIR MAX 97
JEWELLERY: STYLIST'S OWN



BIKINI TOP : LOUIS VUITTON
PANTS : JORDAN
SHOES : AIR JORDAN 1 SHADOW SATIN
JEWELLERY : STYLISTS OWN



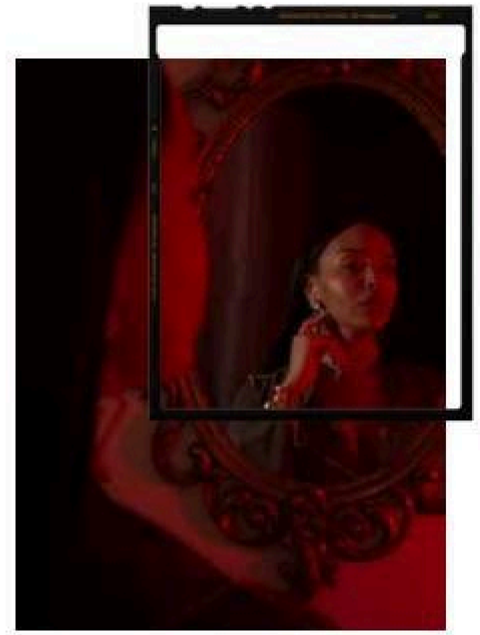
PHOTOGRAPHER: NAZA QUIEROS
MODEL: TERRASHA MORGAN
MAKE UP ARTIST: EVA GONZALEZ
STYLING/ART DIRECTION/CONCEPT:
FENNA LANG
VIDEOGRAPHER: DIEGO RUIZ
HAIR: ARMANDO RODRIGUEZ



YINKA WEARS JACKET BY NEOSS LDN
BRACELETS BY MAYU
EARRINGS BY BUTLER & WILSON
NECKLACES: STYLISTS OWN

OPPOSITE:
YASMIN WEARS JACKET BY JUNLI
BELT BY GDS
EARRINGS BY TOPSHOP

HASHTAG AD









DENISA WEARS TOP BY AQ/AQ
JEANS BY KSENIA SCHNAIDER
EARRINGS BY BUTLER & WILSON
BRACELETS & RING BY SWAROVSKI



SIMRAN WEARS JACKET BY YOUPEOPLE

NADINE WEARS JACKET BY NEOSS LDN
BIKINI: STYLIST'S OWN

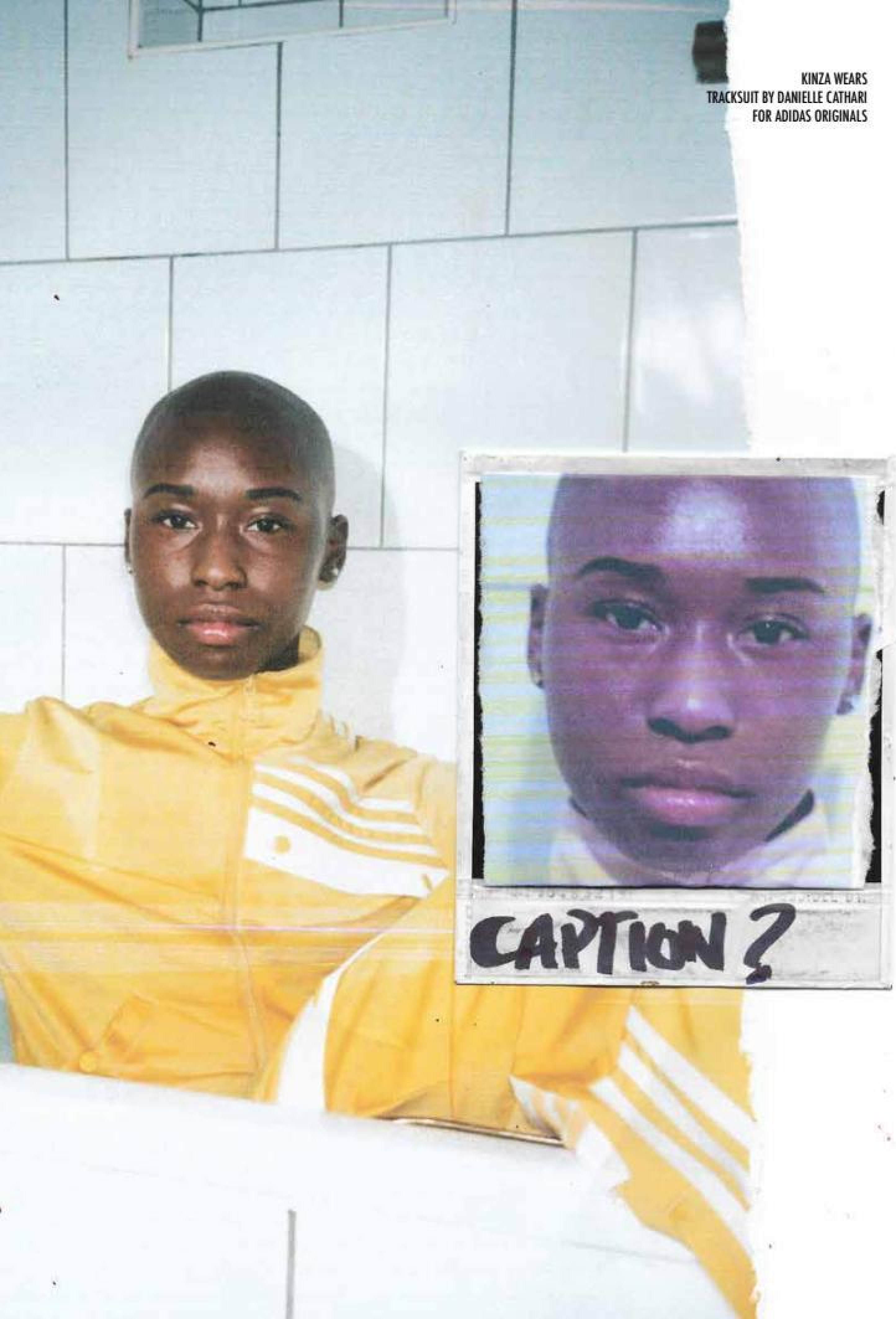
VANESSA WEAR EARRINGS BY JON RICHARD
NECKLACES BY SWAROVSKI





GET THAT COIN

SNACK



KINZA WEARS
TRACKSUIT BY DANIELLE CATHARI
FOR ADIDAS ORIGINALS



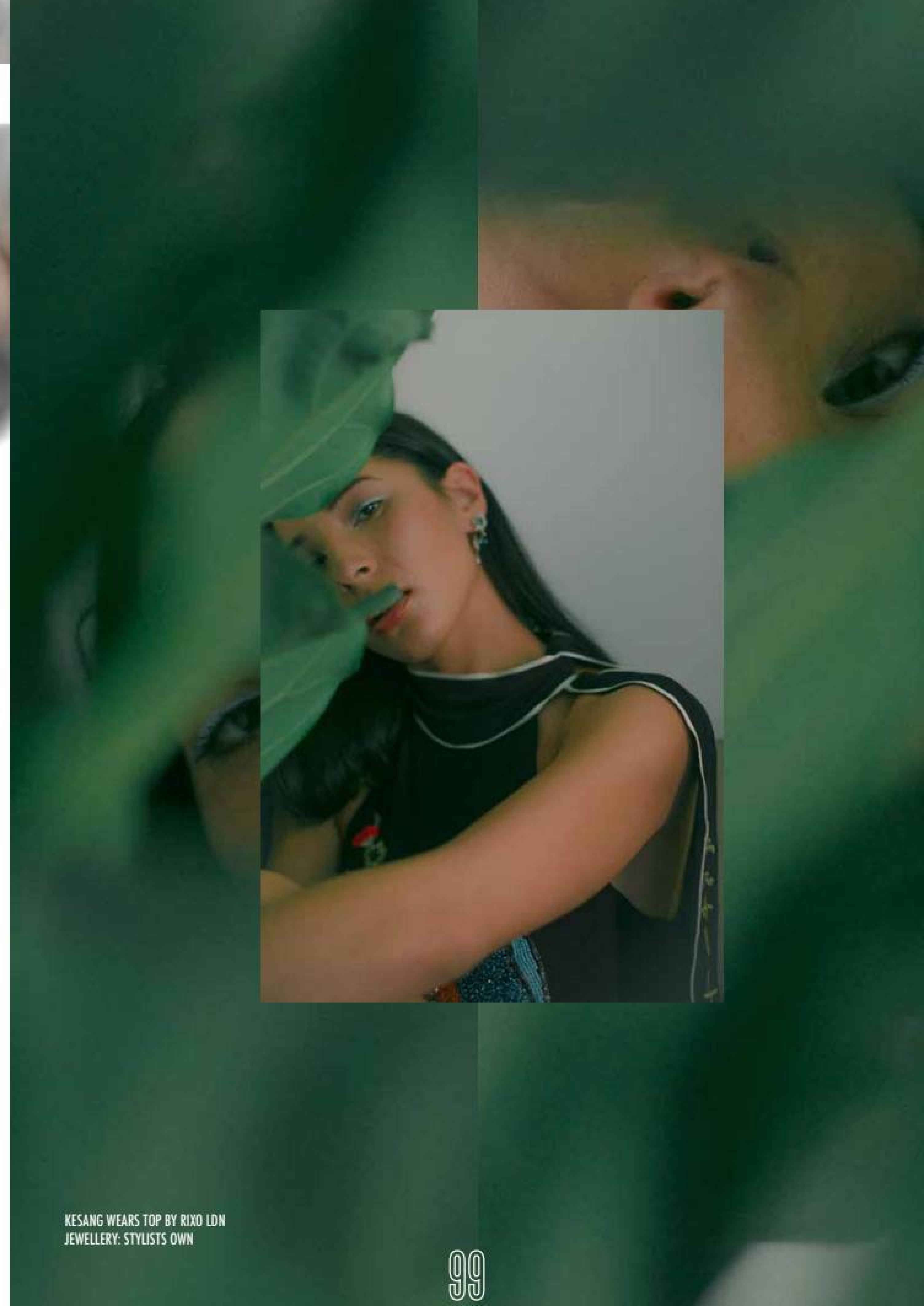
SAL WEARS BERET BY BLITZ LONDON
HOODY BY SOULLAND
JACKET BY CARHARTT
EARRINGS BY JON RICHARD



#INREALLIFE
CREATIVE DIRECTION BY ALIZÉ DEMANGE & BARDHA KRASNIQI
ADDITION DIRECTION BY THURSDAY.
PHOTOGRAPHY BY BARDHA KRASNIQI
STYLING BY RHEA FRANCOIS & ALIZÉ DEMANGE
GRAPHIC DESIGN BY CHIAMAKA OJECHI
MAKE UP BY SUKHY BHANDAL & NINA FAY ROBINSON



LUBIANA WEARS SHIRT BY SOULLAND
DRESS BY VIVETTA
NECKLACE BY FANASKII
EARRINGS BY BUTLER & WILSON



KESANG WEARS TOP BY RIXO LDN
JEWELLERY: STYLISTS OWN








CHYNNA JESHI LOLA










BY YUMI CARTER
















CHYNNA
WEARING: MAHARISHI









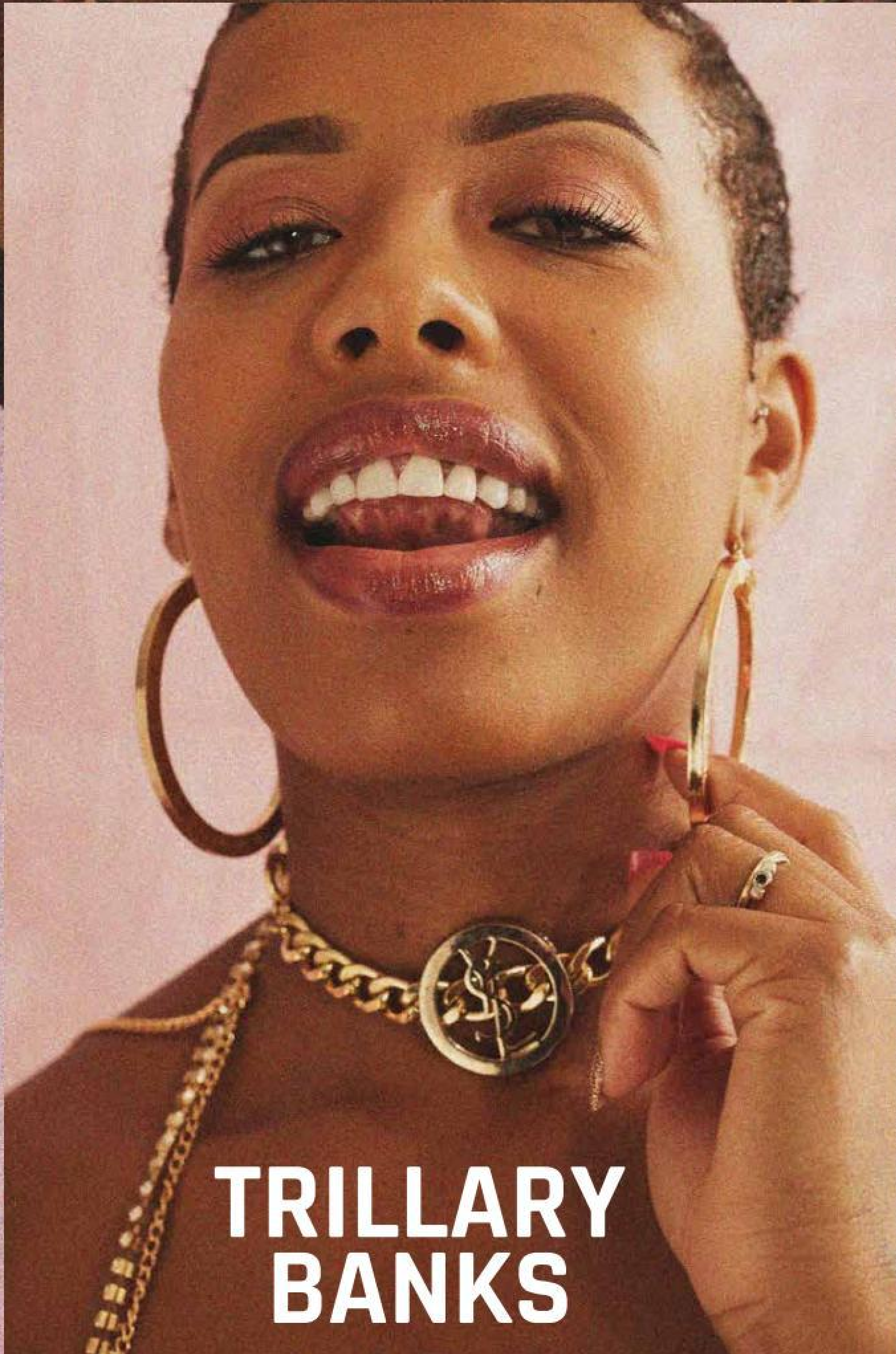
JESHI
WEARING : LIFES A BEACH



LOLA
WEARING : BILLIONAIRE BOYS CLUB







TRILLARY BANKS





EARRINGS BY VERSACE
CHOKER BY YSL
GOLD CHAIN BRAS: STYLIST OWN
SUNGLASSES BY URBAN OUTFITTERS
BERET BY ROKIT
BRACELET: ARTISTS OWN
SHORTS BY LADY LUCIE LATEX
NECKLACES BY HOUSE OF MIDAS





BRA BY LADY LUCIE LATEX
MOTORBIKE JACKET BY DAINESE
COMBAT TROUSERS BY URBAN OUTFITTERS
LOUIS VUITTON PENDANT NECKLACE BY HOUSE OF MIDAS
SHOES BY TOPSHOP





PHOTOGRAPHY: EVE POWER
STYLING: KASHMIR WICKHAM
MAKE-UP: LAI MAKEUP
HAIR: ZATEESHA BARBOUR
STYLING ASSISTANT: LEA FEDERMANN

CHOKER + HARNESS BRA BY LADY LUCIE LATEX
SHIRT BY BURBERRY
HOT PANTS BY LADY LUCIE LATEX
SHOES BY TOPSHOP
SHADES BY URBAN OUTFITTERS

paq
paqaged goods

ART DIRECTION BY PAQ
PHOTOS BY JOSHUA ALLEN + CHIAMAKA OJECHI

What is paq?
paq is a creative agency, specialising in graphic design, photography, film, fashion and art direction.

Where did the concept of paq originate from?
Founded in 2014, the concept for paq came during our final year of university.

The solitary student, sceptical about sharing ideas was one we could all relate to but collectively, we soon came to the realisation that collaboration worked better than competition. As a result, this allowed us to grow conceptually and express ourselves creatively with new perspectives.

Coming together birthed the first acronym and mentality for what paq stands for, 'putting aside qualms'.

Now in a class of our own, we register our vision through 'purpose, authenticity and quality', with the aim of creating visually impactful and inspiring content filled with identity.

paq stand for purpose, authenticity, quality; what does this mean to you?

Purpose:
Knowing who we are and what we stand for; executed with meaning and an assured vision for our desired goal.

Authenticity:
OG. No plagiarism.

Quality:
The standard and integral ingredient in the process, from beginning to end. Nothing less and more is always welcome.

Where do you draw inspiration from as a collective?
From everything; to the love and appreciation we receive, to the haters; disappointments and wins; nature, music, film, conversations, God. We've had ideas inspired by the aesthetics of a Post Office, or the process boarding an aeroplane and greeting the cabin crew.

With that said, we're inspired by each other on a daily basis. Everyone in the paq family is a super hero within their own right.

Kendrick Lamar was seen wearing your 'double red primary paq pullover', what does it mean to have a nod from one of hip hop's biggest artists?
We're all massive Kendrick Lamar fans so keeping it all the way humble, it means the most and reassures us that we're heading in the right direction. Kendrick is a symbol of greatness, not only for his lyrical genius but his overall artistry. We stop everything we're doing whenever a new Kendrick video drops, not to mention, his style has gone to new levels. So having him wear our double red pullover is a dream realised and a reminder that we can achieve anything and more.

What is the importance of creativity to you?
Being creative is similar to having diplomatic immunity. The power to manifest ideas and showcase them to others, architecting thoughts and building them in the real world. paq being the foundation to artist real estate.
P.S. We the real estate agents.

What would you like to see next for paq?
Expansion, growth. Inheriting more space for enjoyment; sharing smiles and experiences together as a unit; taking flight in the drop-tops for global excursions.

paq.works

"WE'RE INSPIRED BY EACH OTHER ON A DAILY BASIS. EVERYONE IN THE PAQ FAMILY IS A SUPER HERO WITHIN THEIR OWN RIGHT"







PRIORITY FIRST CLASS PAQAGE™

PAQAGEDGOODS
—
THEPRIMARYPAQ

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JAMIE BACKSHALL

PHOTO BY HANIFAH MOHAMMED
WORDS BY JAMES LOACH

GET TO KNOW JAMIE BACKSHALL, THE DESIGNER, BOXER AND DR. MARTENS ACCESSORIES DESIGNER HAILING FROM SOUTH CROYDON. AGED 23, BACKSHALL INITIALLY BEGAN HIS FASHION EXCURSION AT UCA EPSOM, SURREY TO PERFECT HIS CRAFT AS AN ASPIRING YOUNG FASHION DESIGNER. AS ONE OF THE LEADERS OF NEXT GEN FASHION DESIGN, JAMIE PLANS TO FRESHEN UP THE INDUSTRY, BACKED BY HIS OVERSIZED SILHOUETTES, GRAPHIC PRINTS AND A CLEAR INTERPRETATION OF MODERN DAY FASHION. FOLLOWING HIS DEBUT GRADUATE COLLECTION ON THE RUNWAY AT GRADUATE FASHION WEEK LAST JULY, JAMIE RECEIVED HIS FIRST FEATURE IN VOGUE. HE'S ALSO A GIFTED BOXER, WHICH HELPS HIM REMAIN DISCIPLINED AND FOCUSED IN HIS WORK SPACE. SOMEHOW HE STILL MANAGES TO FIND TIME TO DESIGN ACCESSORIES AT DR. MARTENS HQ IN CAMDEN, NORTH LONDON. ABSORB JAMIE BACKSHALL'S DEBUT GRADUATE COLLECTION IN PERSON BEFORE HE UNVEILS THE POST-GRADUATE FOLLOW-UP...

Who is Jamie Backshall?

A mo'fucking G! [Laughs] No, I'm joking. I am Jamie Backshall, a young, aspiring fashion designer from London, tryna conquer the world – some Pinky and the Brain shit! I want people to see everything I'm about and represent through my clothes.

When and how did you begin your journey in fashion design?

I've always been into my clothes, I went through so many experimental phases [laughs] trust me. Ask my boys, they'd tell you some of the mad shit I used to wear [laughs] because, to be honest, that was the way I could fully express myself, through my clothes. I got a job working in Urban Outfitters as a sales assistant when I was 16 or 17. My friends working there were all older, doing fashion courses. I would always chat about wanting to do the same and they gave me all the advice I needed to do it. I did a foundation at UCA Epsom, then stayed to do my BA in fashion design. It was mad because when I started I was so out of my depths, everyone could sew and I couldn't thread a fucking machine [laughs]. But if anything that made me work harder as I needed to be the best, but I loved my time there! The staff around the whole uni were amazing but the tutors I had over the four years were a different class, I can't thank them enough for everything they did and taught me to get me where I am now. So big up UCA Epsom. After GFW, madness started to happen, I started getting features and my clothes were worn by artists so it was mad for me to experience. I got my first design job at Topman straight from uni, I started Topman then graduated the next day [laughs]. My time there was sick, I learnt loads! I was there for five months and got the job at Dr. Martens where I'm at now! But every single day after work, that's my time to work on my own shit, any spare moment. That's the goal innit, my own label and world domination.

We heard about you shortly after your GFW '17 presentation, what are the references that influenced your GFW collection?

Ah nice, I'm glad to hear it got out further than people at the show! My main inspiration came from my favourite Tupac poem, "The Rose That Grew From Concrete." I dissected this into parts which started with the nineties skate youth culture in New York, mainly when my boy showed me Larry Clark's film K.I.D.S... that's when I was like, yeah this is me. I used all the influences for the silhouette – I saw a quote from one skater, "We wear trousers the size of tree trunks," so that's what I did. Baggy steez. My muse for the whole project and still to this day will be a part of each collection is Harold Hunter. My favourite skater and just a fucking G. R.I.P. The roses then came from an artist named Pierre Joseph Redoute. He paints these beautiful roses man, and I loved them and straight away thought print. I combined these with Camilo Jose Vergara's photography of the Bronx in the 1970's. His photography is fucking cold and really portrayed what I wanted. My final inspiration came from wanting to create the rose growing from the concrete through my cutting approach – so I looked at this architect called Gordon Matta Clarke. He drills massive holes in derelict buildings - holes through holes in all shapes and sizes to create perspective, so I took this into my clothes. I wanted to portray this really gritty culture and environment mixed in with these beautiful feminine roses – to create a softer feel yet the story behind was far from soft. It was like I wanted to portray these really rugged carefree skaters throwing on their clothes not giving a shit, yet shown in a beautiful way.

Describe your thought process when working towards your collection?

My thought process is organised chaos but I always want my clothes to reflect my moods, feelings and shit that I love and people know me for. I get inspiration from all types of things but for my first collections, I've always drawn my main inspiration through my love of youth culture. Shit just comes and goes then comes again and once I get like imagery and stories together then I can start visualising more of a clear approach I want to take. Then once I've got it going on it just snowballs and I'm in my own little world with all my ideas, then things start to unfold.

"MY MAIN INSPIRATION CAME FROM MY FAVOURITE TUPAC POEM, "THE ROSE THAT GREW FROM CONCRETE," AND WANTING TO CREATE THE ROSE GROWING FROM THE CONCRETE THROUGH MY CUTTING APPROACH"

Who are your peers inside fashion? why?

Design-wise I love Raf, just his approach, his aesthetic, the way everything is so effortless, yet so good. I remember watching Dior and I and got so gassed and inspired. Then another designer who's played a huge part in my learning and developing is Liam Hodges. I'd got an internship with him at the end of my second year, which was one of the best experiences I've had. The amount of stuff I learnt being there, like my skills, about the in's and out's of the industry, just being in his studio every day was fucking inspiring and made me realise that's what I want. I've been lucky enough to go and help out since and we still keep in contact if I need advice I can ask and he will try to help me. I'm mad grateful for having that experience and still being able to shout him. Then finally it's Derek Ridgers. I got a couple books of his, and always draw to them for inspiration. Especially in my new collection for SS19... teaser alert [Laughs].

You're currently the accessories designer at Dr. Martens, how did that come about?

It came after my job at Topman. I was an assistant designer there on casual shorts, trousers and accessories as well. I was lucky because both my managers there really pushed me quick to develop. Then the job came up at Dr. Martens and I got it. I love it, learning so much and the team here is great and very supportive of me doing my own label.

Who would you like to see wearing your pieces?

There are so many people I see in the videos I watch, or the music listen to and [think] you'd look sick in my stuff. I think model wise, Shaun Ross would look so hard and definitely Slick Woods. Artist wise, there's my favourite American rappers who I could see wearing my pieces like ScHoolboy Q, that would be cold. I could definitely see slowthai wearing some shit as well, that whole gritty approach he has, is the story behind my collections. I've been fortunate enough to have some artists in my stuff already which has been amazing and they looked sick so, right now if I feel the person's right and the opportunity is there for them to use my stuff, I'll do it.

I noticed you're a keen boxer in the Queensbury boxing league, that's impressive! Tell us a bit about that.

I first started boxing as a kid, went to a gym for a few sessions not knowing what to expect, then other things took over but I've always loved the sport. About four years or five years ago, my cousin who had his license in Thai boxing took me to a gym on our local estate. I remember going in and wanting to get fit, literally nothing else. Then after a month one of the coaches said to me they saw a lot of potential and wanna push me forward to eventually fight. So I picked up my training and started sparring, since then I've fallen in love with it, I see boxing as an art as well. Like a big game of chess, it fascinates me, so being able to take part is sick. I remember going into my first fight, an underdog geezer - who I actually knew and sparred with - was the favourite. I walked out to fucking roars all cheering my name, literally came firm handed [laughs]! It was fucking amazing man, then I went on to put him down in the first and get a unanimous points decision, then went to Ibiza three days after to celebrate [laughs]! Boxing will always be a part of my life, so yeah I'll always be involved with boxing.

With fashion and boxing on your mind, are there any sub-cultures elsewhere that you take an interest in?

Definitely, my dad grew up when subcultures were at their peak. He was a skinhead so I've always been into that scene from a young age and before anyone judges or comments about all skinheads being racist, that's a load of bollocks. It's a multi-cultural movement, then adopted by these racist idiots. But yeah man the skinhead subculture is very close to my heart and you will see much more of this has inspiration in my collections. Hence why I love Derek Ridgers' work, his photography of London subculture is next to none, he's also the reason I found a love for punk as well.

jamiebackshall.com

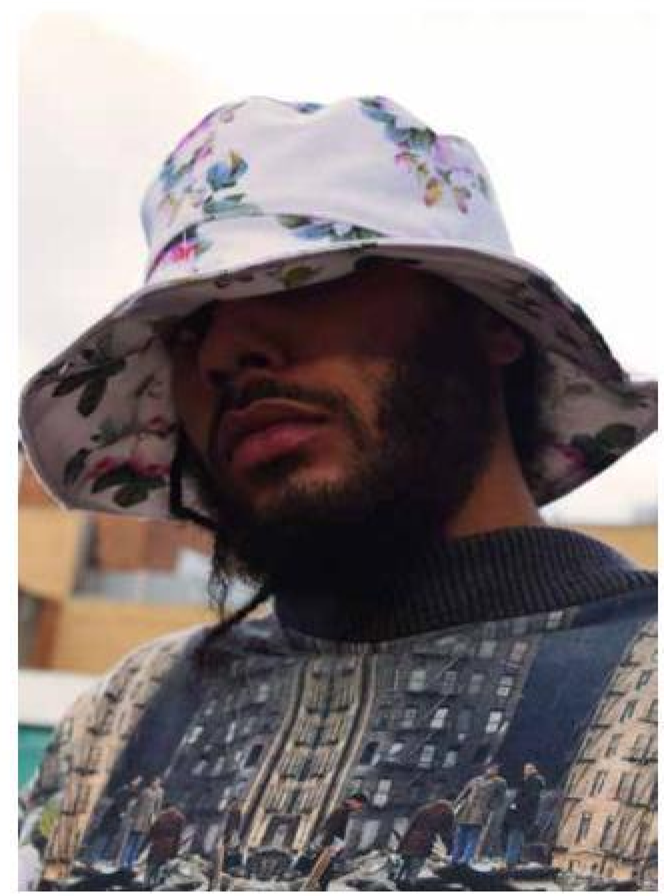
PHOTOS BY ABBY KENNY
STYLING BY ADAM MUSCATT
ART DIRECTION BY JAMES LOACH
MODEL: CAS JONES
CLOTHING BY BY JAMIE BACKSHALL

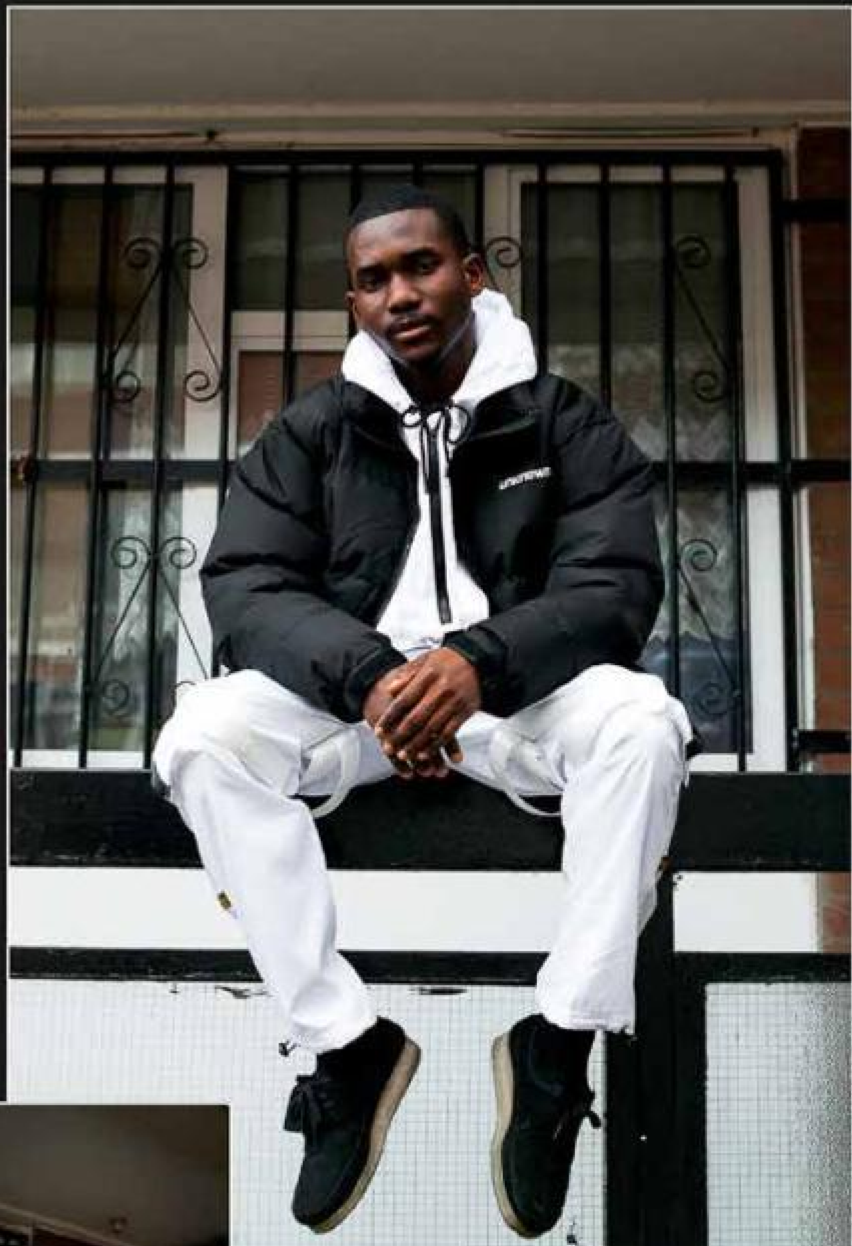
"I SEE BOXING AS AN ART AS WELL. LIKE A BIG GAME OF CHESS, IT FASCINATES ME, SO BEING ABLE TO TAKE PART IS SICK"





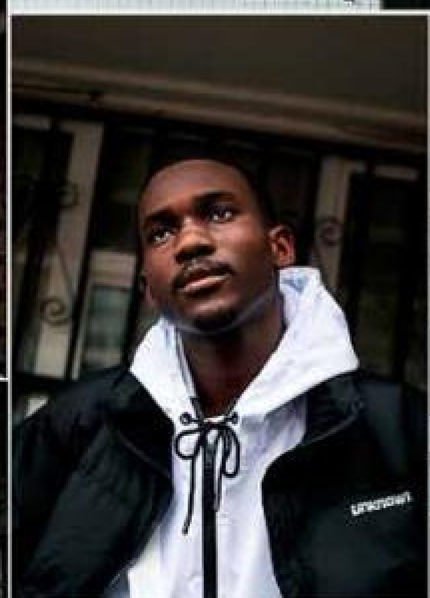














UNKNOWN LONDON

PHOTOS BY RIO BLAKE
WORDS BY JAMES LOACH
STYLING BY KASHMIR WICKHAM

Since leaving education at 16, Joe Granger and Callum Vineer have transformed a bedroom dream into reality. Unknown London is currently shaping London's street fashion culture the right way. The young and ambitious founders were amongst the many start-up fashion brands that flooded onto streets and social media a few years ago. However Unknown is one of the few streetwear labels to surpass the competition and flourish into a sustainable artistic movement, with its roots firmly intact. Hosting pop-up stores worldwide, Unknown has created an atmospheric melting pot of aspiring fashion designers and young creatives. We linked up with Unknown to find out more about their beginnings, dreams and visions...

What is Unknown?
Unknown is our brand, made by us, for everyone.

How did the two of you meet?
We met at college and became close mates, we had very similar tastes in fashion and were frustrated [by] the lack of any stand-out, affordable brands around. In 2015 there was almost nothing in the gap between high-street and luxury, so after a few months of knowing each other we had the idea to start a brand ourselves, and within a couple of weeks Unknown was born. Things took off rapidly and a few months on, we took the risk of dropping out of college and put everything into running the brand full time. Since then we've moved out of our parent's homes and have our own place with some mates, plus our first London based studio/office. It's all a bit mad!

What encouraged you to make the decision of starting a fashion label?
Mainly the lack of brands making affordable and interesting clothes around that time, there was literally nothing around. But right after we started up there was a crazy wave of start-up brands with similar ideas to us. With the new wave of competition we had to quickly separate ourselves from them and start our own lane, this reaction was a pretty key part in our progression forwards.

Is there a particular message you're trying to put across with your garments?
We've never really been about deep messages within our collections, we've just been trying to curate interesting, good- looking collections with a consistent pattern of high-quality, perfectly crafted fits and more interesting details and textiles.

Where do you look for sources of inspiration and reference for your collections?
Most of our collections were born from making what we want to wear ourselves, either developing ideas from scratch or finding a crazy nice piece in a vintage store and developing something from that. We're also big fans of hip hop and often look to old school album covers and music videos for reference of good cuts and colour-ways for collections.

You work primarily with young and aspiring creatives in London, how important is this to you personally, and the brand?
Supporting our friends has always been the main priority for us, we would never be where we are now without the help and support we've had from our friends and everyone we've met on our journey who's continued to support us and help us wherever they can. So for us it's always been without question that we show our friends the same support, we always work with small-time photographers, all our models are friends - most were unsigned when we started out. Since then, everyone's been progressing together, many are now moving up and signed, it makes this all far more rewarding to see that.

What are your thoughts on street fashion in today's climate?
Street fashion right now is a bit of a madness.. in just the couple of years since we started, almost all major luxury fashion brands have been dropping tracksuit based streetwear collections which you never would've seen five years ago. Almost everyone is producing 'street fashion' so the competition has got crazy, but it's exciting to see what everyone's sending down the runways these days, it's getting weirder.

You teamed up with A$AP Mob member TyY on a capsule, tell us how that came about?
We first met ASAP TyY and his boys in Paris at Fashion Week 2017, they fucked with the brand, we got talking about how we could work together and over the next few months [we] developed the collection together. From there we hosted pop-ups and parties in London, Amsterdam, Paris and flew ASAP TyY out for our pop-up and party in Tokyo which was crazy fun. We'd both been fans of ASAP Mob since we were young so it was a bit of a dream come true to be able to work with them and see everyone repping the collection.

Having already affiliated yourselves with prestigious artists and individuals to date, who would you most like to see dressed in Unknown?
We get asked a lot and the answer is always changing, but we've been following Sheck Wes for the past year and seeing him begin to blow is exciting. He's definitely on our list to work with, Takashi Murakami would also be a bit of a dream to see wear our stuff, hopefully one day we can make that happen.

What can we expect from you both on your journey forward?
Expect to see a lot of us... The rest of this year is booked up with pop-ups, showrooms and parties all over the world. We've got some huge projects set to release this year that we can't really talk about, but expect some surprising collaborations and crazy collections, [we're] very gassed to show you all what we've got in store.

unknownlondon.com

"WE'VE BEEN FOLLOWING SHECK WES FOR THE PAST YEAR AND SEEING HIM BEGIN TO BLOW IS EXCITING. HE'S DEFINITELY ON OUR LIST TO WORK WITH, TAKASHI MURAKAMI WOULD ALSO BE A BIT OF A DREAM"



WWW
What We Wear

IN THREE SHORT YEARS, WHAT WE WEAR HAS BECOME THE GO-TO BRAND FOR THOSE KEEN TO LOOK BOTH CHIC AND SPORTY. SITUATED ON THE BRINK OF HIGH FASHION AND CULT STREETWEAR, THEIR CLOTHING IS FOR MALES A STEP AHEAD OF THE STYLE BLOGS.

DEBUTED BY BRITISH MUSICAL TREASURE, TINIE TEMPAH IN JANUARY 2017, WWW HAS ESTABLISHED ITSELF VIA STREAMLINED SILHOUETTES AND SUBTLE ACCESSORIES. WITH THEIR THIRD SEASON SHOWN AT LONDON FASHION WEEK MEN'S BACK IN JANUARY, IT'S CLEAR TO SEE WWW IS GOING NOWHERE.

REINFORCING BRITISH FASHION STAPLES LIKE PRINCE OF WALES CHECK, DOUBLE-BREASTED JACKETS AND HARRINGTONS, WWW'S DESIGNS ARE NOT WHAT YOU'D EXPECT FROM A HUGELY SUCCESSFUL MUSICIAN, BUT IT'S EVIDENT THAT TINIE'S LOVE OF STYLE IS DEEPLY INVESTED IN THE CLOTHING. IT SEEMS THE BRAND'S GOING HAVE HUGE STAYING POWER; LONG LIVE WHAT WE WEAR.

WHATWEWEAR.COM















FILFURY

PHOTO BY OMAR KHALEEL
WORDS BY CONOR RUA
ALL OTHER IMAGERY BY FILFURY

A TYPICAL BRITISH FEBRUARY DAY AT 2PM IS COLD, WET AND GREY. I WALKED TO MEET THE MAN CALLED FILFURY, CREATOR OF J HUS'S ICONIC 'COMMON SENSE' ALBUM COVER AT THE MILL IN CENTRAL LONDON. WHILE GETTING CLOSER TO THE FRONT ENTRANCE IT DAWNED ON ME THAT I ACTUALLY DIDN'T KNOW FILFURY'S REAL NAME, WAS IT SILLY TO PRESUME PHIL? LUCKILY I STUCK WITH FILFURY. WE MET AND PROCEEDED IN AN ELEVATOR UP TO A PRIVATE ROOM ON THE TOP LEVEL. SITTING DOWN TO CHAT WITH A CITYSCAPE OF LONDON AS THE BACKDROP OUR INTERVIEW, WE JUMPED STRAIGHT INTO IT.

So Filfury tell us a bit about you.
I go by the artist name Filfury, originally from Brum a.k.a Birmingham. I didn't do too good at school and finished early. I went on to Art College and worked my ass off – I bloody loved it, before going on to University and winning a design award at the end of it. This confirmed my belief that design is what I'm supposed to be doing. It was my calling. Then I moved to London to get busy.

Traditionally I trained as a graphic designer then went into print design before falling in love with motion design, animation and graphics. In the last seven years I've lived in London, Sydney, Amsterdam and Brighton, working myself up the career ladder. Now here at The Mill as a director of TV commercials, I'm also always doing art.

I guess I caught attention and built a large following by doing these digital mash ups. It started with an artwork I did by taking an Air Max 90 and deconstructed it through photographs I took, to make new form and made a Beretta handgun, since then it blew up. I was making that kind of style of art for a couple of years before moving in physical sculptures. I've always been balancing my day job and art.

Why the hell did you move to so many cities?
I get bored quite easily, I like new things and always say, "Monday is a new leaf how can I make a better version of myself." Whether that is meeting new people or learning new things. I guess moving around I was able to jump up positions and money, never letting it get stale.

How did you start doing these digital mash ups?
First of all it was a design challenge. I'm inspired by what's around me, being a fan of good footwear naturally it became the focus. I wanted to change the graphic language of the trainers and give it a new form. I wanted to take ingredients of recognisable form and texture then paint a new picture with it. Nowadays this type of art is very common with Hypebeast and Highsnobiety culture from some artists who asked me how to do it two or three years ago now having a big following from it.

Designing J Hus' album cover, how did that come about?
It came through one of the guys at Black Butter who referenced my artwork in a meeting. They got in touch with me to come into the studio where I heard the whole album. I thought they were only going to play me a 20 second snippet but no, it was the full album. It was a very surreal moment being in this record studio with the bass at the max. His team started to chat over their initial thoughts for the front cover highlighting they already had amazing content from Olivia Rose but wanted a bit of a graphic conceptual front. I want to highlight something important here, the whole turnaround period for this artwork was two weeks.



"I WAS ORIGINALLY BRIEFED THAT THE ALBUM WAS GOING TO BE CALLED "FISHERMAN" SO I HAD A LOT MORE CONCEPTUAL IDEAS SUCH AS A COUNCIL ESTATE FLOODED WITH WATER"

Can you explain your creative process to create the final artwork?
Moving fast, I went away and started to mock up some really rough ideas around 12 different routes trying to pin down the essence of the artwork and how it ties to his personality. I was originally briefed that the album was going to be called 'Fisherman' which is one of the songs on there. A bucket hat/fisherman hat was a cool starting point.

I was also playing around with graphics of the bucket hat trying to get things falling out connecting to his album. It was important for us to highlight the British element, that's why the money seemed to make the most sense purely because it's so UK centric. The final artwork was to express the street, where he came from and the money to represent where his head was at and where he is heading. My goal was to make something no one had seen before, something iconic.

Something that people wouldn't think about is that there were quite a few legal hurdles using the money in official artworks, I had to apply to the Bank of England to request permission to use it. They have a lot of specific rules on how you creatively reinterpret banks notes, so if I hadn't curled all these notes in the right places with only a certain amount of percentage of the full note visible they would have all had to have specimen watermarked over it.

Another little secret is if you look close enough on the toggle of the bucket hat you will see my logo the two F's which they never realised until it was printed and delivered. Overall J Hus' 'Common Sense' album cover is the perfect example of my digital art and making something graphic bold and a little bit bonkers with a street element.

You mentioned other routes of the artwork, what were they?
I had a few more banana ideas; the final concept definitely fell in the middle. As I said before I was originally briefed that the album was going to be called 'Fisherman' so I had a lot more conceptual ideas such as a council estate flooded with water and he was standing in the middle of a floating car with a fishing line and all this kind of stuff.

I had loads of variations; one was playing with Mercedes cars due to his famous line in 'Did You See'. I love to keep my artwork as symmetrical as possible, so I had mirrored the cars on different angles. I had a lot of portrait options, one had diamonds for his eyes and I was playing a lot with a fishing hook quite a lot with a piece of jewellery as a J. It was going to be a diamond encrusted J with Hus next to it.

With the album cover being a success, what's next for you?
Many people probably didn't realise but I directed J Hus' 'Bouff Daddy' video as his team heard about what I do with The Mill and all the adverts I direct. Off the back of the 'Bouff Daddy' music video I have had a lot of other music management teams approach me to direct their artists, but for me it's about picking the right one. I am still on this planet to learn different techniques and visuals and will continue to do so.

@FILFURY
www.filfury.com









MIGGY

PHOTOS BY DILLON GERSTUNG
WORDS BY CELIYA KÖSTER

MIGGY IS A FILMMAKER AND VIDEO DIRECTOR RESPONSIBLE FOR VISUALS FOR NOTABLE NAMES LIKE RICH THE KID, PLAYBOI CARTI, WIZ KHALIFA AND VIPER FAVOURITES, DIVINE COUNCIL. HIS VISUALS DISPLAY TONES OF OTHER-WORLDLINESS; DISTINCTIVELY MODERN YET NOSTALGIC. IT'S 10PM IN LONDON AS I CALL MIGGY, IT'S 2PM IN LA WHERE HE'S LOCATION SCOUTING FOR A NEW PROJECT. WE SPOKE ABOUT BUILDING HIS BRAND AESTHETIC AND THE CREATIVE PROCESS BEHIND PAST WORK.

Firstly, there is very little information about you online, what do you want readers to know about you?
That I came from nothing I guess, that's something that can inspire everybody. I grew up in Tucson, Arizona. I just moved out to LA, when I first got here I had to get a regular day job, during that first year it helped me get a feel for how I could do this independently and live off it. It's been like three years now, I feel like anyone can really do this if they have the patience and drive.

How does living in LA shape your creative style?
The environment definitely helps, in Arizona it was a lot of rural landscapes and the desert, like buildings here and there, but there wasn't as much. When I came out [to LA] there were endless options and opportunities, so everything I have worked on out here, the locations have really helped me build a visual aesthetic.
What was the first video that put you on the map?
The first video that put me on the map was 'Plug' by Rich The Kid, [Playboi] Carti and Kodak [Black].

How did you get that opportunity?
That was just random Internet stuff, I hit him up with a tweet and I think one of my friends messaged him and he responded, he asked if I wanted to shoot a video and I was like, "I'm down." We went from there, we basically pulled up at their hotel and ran around Hollywood to get the shots, we ended up linking with Migos later that day.

Let's talk about the creative process behind your music videos, what's your interaction with the performer to define the story and the look?
I mean it's variable, it's different for every case; I'll walk into it with an aesthetic in mind and try to get that across in post- production. I try to not rely too much on effects and things like that, unless it prescribes to the aesthetic and the whole vibe of the visual..I'll go into the situation knowing what I want to shoot, so then in post [production] it will already look a certain way. I like the shot to be controlled so I know exactly what I'm gonna get when I do certain things.

Were you doing something creative before picking up a video camera?
I've always been into art in general, I used to draw a lot when I was younger. I mainly got my interest in video from my grandpa, [he] had his own VHS camera and he would film a lot when I was a kid; that was one thing that made me think I wanted to do this, I always liked the idea of capturing something.

Which video are you proudest of?
The visual I'm proudest of is the one I did for Lord Linco, '27', it's still gaining some traction but is by far my favourite visual to date.

Which artist is on your bucket list to direct for?
I'm thinking Travis Scott; an artist that's known to care about their visuals, there's a lot of artists that don't care, so I wouldn't want to work with them. I came up on this one random punk band called The Chats, they're based in Australia, they make like skate-punk shit. I want to do some punk stuff because you can do a super lose concept and make it funny.

Viper loves your 'Dick in The Dope' video for $ilkMoney, who came up with the concept for that?
We didn't have access to a lot in terms of budget and stuff, so we improvised with what we had, I'm pretty D.I.Y. with my approach about things. I added the bag because of the lyrics, I thought it was funny to be talking about a bag of weed, I wanted to play on that. We also used a reference from Harold & Kumar Go to White Castle, in that movie there was a scene where Kumar has a fantasy about having sex with a giant bag of weed, it was funny. The reference was like classic, it put it all together. I threw in a bunch of moss from the arts and crafts store and used a bag I had in my garage. I had this random pink wig, so we put the glasses on top and the wig, which was mostly Silk's idea. I still have the bag too.

What kind of subject's appeal to you when creating?
I have my own personal brand and aesthetic when I approach things now, before it was variable based on the artist. Most of my videos are retro and nostalgic in a kind of way, pulling on memories and dreams too; like with 'Let It Go' with Uno the Activist, there are parts later in the visual with darker even- lit skies. I made the sky dark because whenever I remember my dreams, everything seems regular, but the sky is always super dark, [even though] it's bright out. I want to eventually get into short films, I like keeping the messages of the videos open to interpretation. Right now I'm trying to create visual commentaries on loneliness, darker vibes, people's minds, you know what I mean?

How would you describe the brand you are creating?
It's mostly like nostalgic, dark vibes, playing on memories. I'm a part of the mid-nineties era, I was born in '95, that's probably why the whole nostalgia thing is super fascinating to me, I just like those visuals. It's about preserving innocence in a way.

What advice would you give to others trying to enter the music or filmmaking industry?
Take risks, that's mainly what I like to do with my stuff. On a lot of occasions I won't have the prefect circumstances to accomplish things, but I find a way, even though maybe it's not conventional or whatever. But take risks and invest in yourself because nobody else is gonna do it for you. I worked at a dollar store and I bought my first camera when I was 16.

What film or video do you think everyone should watch?
Clockwork Orange or The Shining.

@shotbymiggy

"I HIT RICH THE KID UP WITH A TWEET AND HE RESPONDED. HE ASKED IF I WANTED TO SHOOT A VIDEO AND I WAS LIKE, 'I'M DOWN'"



MASTER P, DA FIRST DON.

WORDS BY CHERÉE

HIP HOP AND MAKING MONEY ARE SYNONYMOUS. IT'S NOT UNUSUAL TO HEAR ABOUT YOUR FAVOURITE RAPPER'S SIDE HUSTLES, LIKE OWNING SOME REAL ESTATE, ENDORSING YOUR GO-TO BRAND OF LIQUOR OR CREATING A CLOTHING LINE, BUT THIS MOGUL MENTALITY WASN'T ALWAYS SO COMMON. MASTER P IS ONE OF HIP HOP'S BEST BUSINESS MINDS, A SELF-MADE MILLIONAIRE AND PURE SUCCESS STORY. HIS LEGACY IS STILL GROWING TODAY BUT IT ALL STARTED WAY BACK. IN 1967 IN NEW ORLEANS, LOUISIANA, MASTER P WAS BORN PERCY MILLER, RAISED IN THE POVERTY OF CALLIOPE HOUSING PROJECTS WITH THE MIND OF A HUSTLER.

Growing up in New Orleans, Master P showed ambition and a drive for success early on in life. He was a dedicated basketball player as a boy, who got himself an athletic scholarship at the University of Houston, but ended up dropping out a couple months later to pursue a business degree instead. Moving his life to Oakland, California; the sunny state became the birth place of his musical empire where he would be one of hip hop's main players. No Limit Records started as an actual record shop, which Master P thoughtfully opened with a $10,000 inheritance cheque, stemming from a malpractice suit after the passing of his grandfather. Using the devastation in his life as motivation, Master P vowed to push his family out of their current situation, when in 1990 his brother Kevin Miller was killed back in their home of New Orleans. Despite the death surrounding him, he used his business mind to birth new ventures and make money through music, dropping his first cassette tape 'Mind Of A Psychopath' the same year. The music kept on coming and after releasing two albums, he sought out Michael Jackson's attorney for lessons about this music business. Miller managed to sign a deal with Priority Records, 85/15 in favour of No Limit - unheard of at the time. Solange Knowles' recent album, 'A Seat at the Table', famously quotes Master P saying, "If this white man [Jimmy Iovine] is offering me a million dollars, I gotta be worth $40m or $50m." Providing us with lesson one in the mogul game - know your worth.

The ol' saying, "you've gotta spend money to make money" rings true with the investments Master P has made throughout his career. He moved in a smart way, known for keeping costs low, cutting out the middle men by doing it all himself and making profits high, to ensure that one investment produced the capital to begin the next. He was noticeably one of the first rappers to see business opportunities outside of the hip hop realm - spreading his investments across industries and becoming the embodiment of rap independence. He used the foundation of No Limit Records to plug money back into a whole range of new businesses such as a travel agency, a Foot Locker retail outlet, real estate, investing in stock, film production (bringing us classics like 'The Players Club' and 'I Got The Hook Up'), television production, toys, clothing, telecommunications - including a phone sex line, jewellery, auto accessories, book and magazine publishing, fast food franchises and gas stations. The man's list of money-making schemes shows his true knack for business domination - no avenue was off limits. When speaking to the New York Times in 1998, Miller said, "You spread out because you never know when it's going to end... Business is like a seesaw going up and down. When one goes down, I have the other one going up. You have to think like that if you want to survive."

Just five years after Master P released his first cassette tape, he moved No Limit Records from Oakland to New Orleans with a whole slew of artists and in-house producers, Beats by the Pound, later known as the Medicine Men, produced P's hit single, 'Ice Cream Man', which catapulted his level of fame. The producers made countless hits for Master P under No Limit



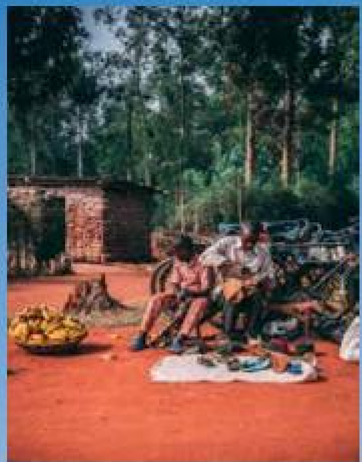
Records, also working with C-Murder and Snoop Dogg. His record label continued to grow and establish music that became imprinted within hip hop's fabric. His most acclaimed album 'MP Da Last Don' sold, half a million copies in it's first week - the last record he put out before claiming he would now be focusing efforts on becoming an entertainment executive. The music even continued on into the next generation with his son Romeo Miller. Aged just 28, Master P's business empire allowed him to stand out amongst the crowd and still have his name spoken with respect in todays world of mega-moguls with the likes of P Diddy, Jay Z and Dr Dre, creating empires worth 1 billion dollars.

There wasn't much that Master P could touch that didn't multiply the money. So let's break it down a little, to demonstrate the work he was putting in across ventures. He had a Sports management agency, No Limit Communications, under his belt, which was a joint venture with marketing guru Djuan Edgerton. His conglomerate company, No Limit Enterprises became a financial powerhouse. His real estate investment and property management company, the New Orleans-based PM Properties, controls over 100 properties across the US and according to Black Enterprise magazine, No Limit Enterprises grossed $110 million in revenue in 1998 alone. There was also No Limit Sports, building contracts with sports icons, paving the way for the likes of Jay Z's Roc Nation Sports today. Master P dominated the era of using hip hop as a growing avenue for income and proved that it was an industry to stay. This level of success inspired other rappers to branch out into wider business ventures and investments, which is why we've got to recognise the foresight that Master P demonstrated as a respected entrepreneurial mind. Well before the likes of Diddy's Revolt TV, Master P was the first rapper to have their own television network with Better Black Television, a New Orleans based cable network. In 1998, arguably in the peak of his career growth, Master P was ranked 10th on Forbes Magazine's List of "America's 40 Highest Paid Entertainers," with an estimated income of $56.5 million. That same year, the only other music company to have more songs in the Top 40 charts was Warner, showing No Limit's dominance in the industry. Even with that amount of success, years on in 2001 he was then one of only six celebrities to make Fortune Magazine's "America's Richest Forty Under Forty" list. His estimated worth of his business dealings put him at number 20 with $361 million.

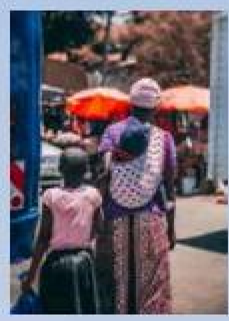
Master P's ambition of becoming the "ghetto Bill Gates" seemed to bloom into fruition after years of grinding in the business world. He had the vision first, to turn hip hop into the global brand it is today. There's nothing that you can't do if you've got hip hop's backing and the smarts to make moves.



'BUSINESS IS LIKE A SEE SAW GOING UP AND DOWN. WHEN ONE GOES DOWN, I HAVE THE OTHER ONE GOING UP.'













KENYA + RWANDA

BY CHARLIE SARSFIELD



Where were these photos taken?
This collection of photographs were taken by me across Kenya and Rwanda, mostly hanging out of a van window! I was lucky to be asked by MTV Staying Alive to go on a trip with them and document the amazing charity work they do in those countries.

What surprised you about your travels through Kenya and Rwanda?
Kenya and Rwanda are similar in a lot of ways, however Rwanda is spotless. It's potentially one of the cleanest countries I've ever been to! The people there were fascinated by me, mainly because I am a white guy. Some of the kids in Rwanda would stop in their paths and just stare at me, which was great for me as it gave me a bit more time to take their picture!







Many of the people you come across have survived famine and genocide, what was the vibe of the people you met?
Honestly, it was amazing to see how far it's all come. Everyone is so lovely there, caring and considerate, even though a lot of them have very little. There's a massive sense of community across all of the villages, something that can't really be said for London. No one seemed to be competitive, everyone's striving to better themselves for the greater good of the country. Everyone wants their country to be great, it never felt like anyone I met was in it for themselves.

What was the quality of life like compared to where you grew up?
I mean there is no comparison. This was my first time in Africa, and honestly I found it heartbreakingly beautiful. The kids there want for nothing, because in reality they don't know it exists. Give them a tyre and a stick, or a football and they're the happiest you've ever seen anyone. I grew up all over the place. First London, then I travelled across Italy, Spain and India for a few years before moving to Cornwall at 10. I felt like I'd seen a lot, but I'd never seen anything like Africa. Although I imagine the quality of life isn't the best, African people certainly know how to smile and I feel that's something we could learn from.

How important do you feel money is to most of the people you encountered?
I think money is important to everyone and they know how important money is. But I don't know if it's much of a priority. They don't strive to be rich, they strive to survive and that's a whole different way of thinking to what we have here, or America. But I don't think they're worse off for it, I've always thought money comes with its own problems and being in Africa I met more happy people there in 10 days than I would here in London.

Did the experience change you in any ways?
In so many ways. That trip taught me a lot, and I had a lot of stuff going on back home at the time, I was struggling a bit. However that trip made me really think about the important things and people in my life. I think we all get a little caught up in the hustle, we rarely enjoy the journey. We're always looking at the competition and what we are doing in comparison. It really taught me the importance of love, not necessarily love between you and a partner, but the love you have for the people in your life, and that's where Africa is richer than we are.

Did your outlook towards money change following your time spent there?
I've never really been the kind of guy who's hell bent on making money. Yo, two years ago I was a runner at MTV and now I get to travel around the world taking photos of some of my favourite people, or make music videos for some of my favourite artists. That's what I set I out to do, the money that comes with that is cool, but it's not the reason I get out of bed.

If you really break it down I think it's an honour to be a photographer, to be able to document a person or an occasion at that time and place is an insane opportunity. So in all honesty it didn't change my mode of thinking towards money, it more made me realise how important friends, lovers, partners and family are. We're stronger in numbers, but everyone around us is hell bent on making it on their own.

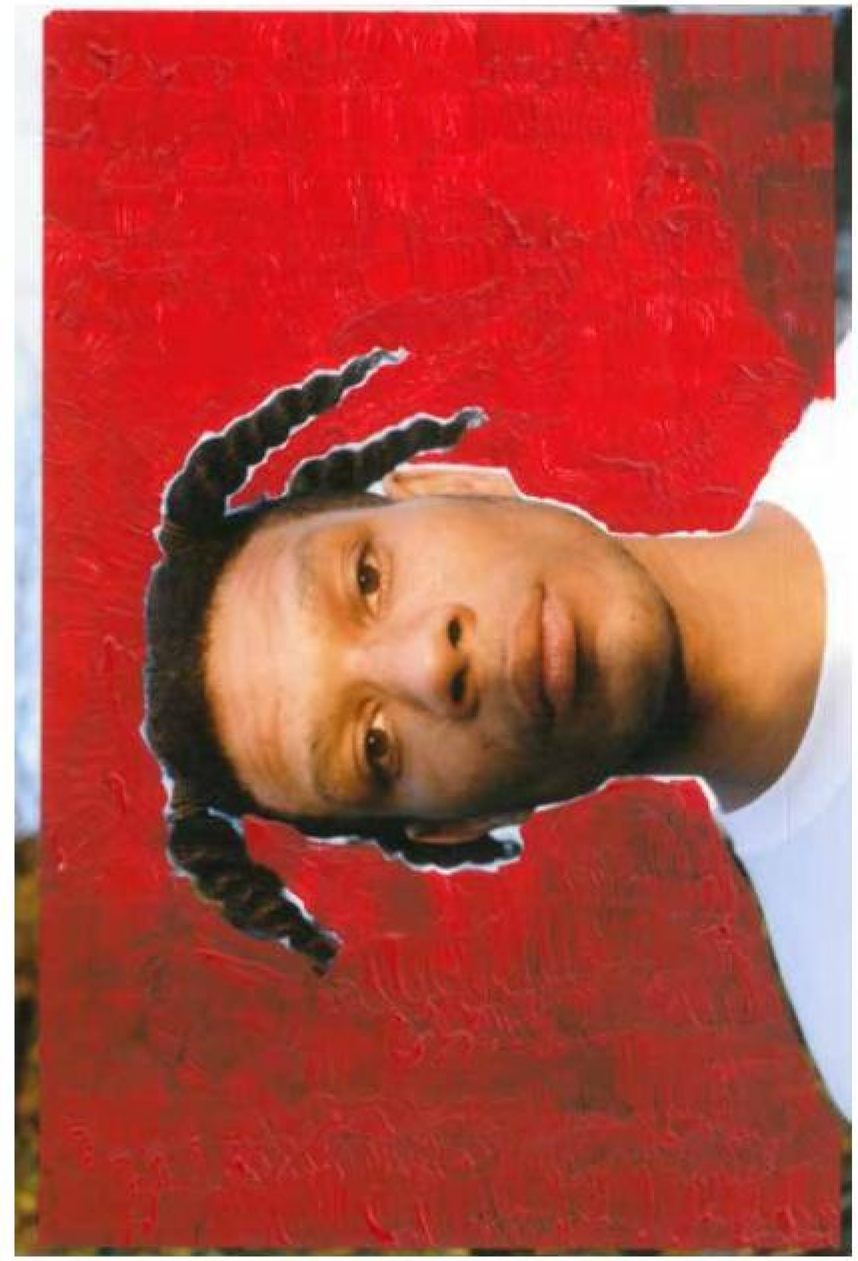
What do you think "Getting Money" means to the people in these photos?
Like I said, I don't think money or getting money is their main agenda. I suppose everything is relative and out there getting money means enough to feed their families, not buy materialistic objects to make them feel good. I feel like maybe I'm being a bit preachy but I feel they're so much more grateful for the small things in life than we are.

What do you think would be the best way for readers to contribute to those you met in Kenya and Rwanda?
Go follow MTV staying alive across all socials. They really do some amazing work, saving lives everyday and the ladies that are in charge over there are some of the best people I've ever met. Reach out to them if you feel you want to help.

@charlie.sarsfield
charliesarsfield.com



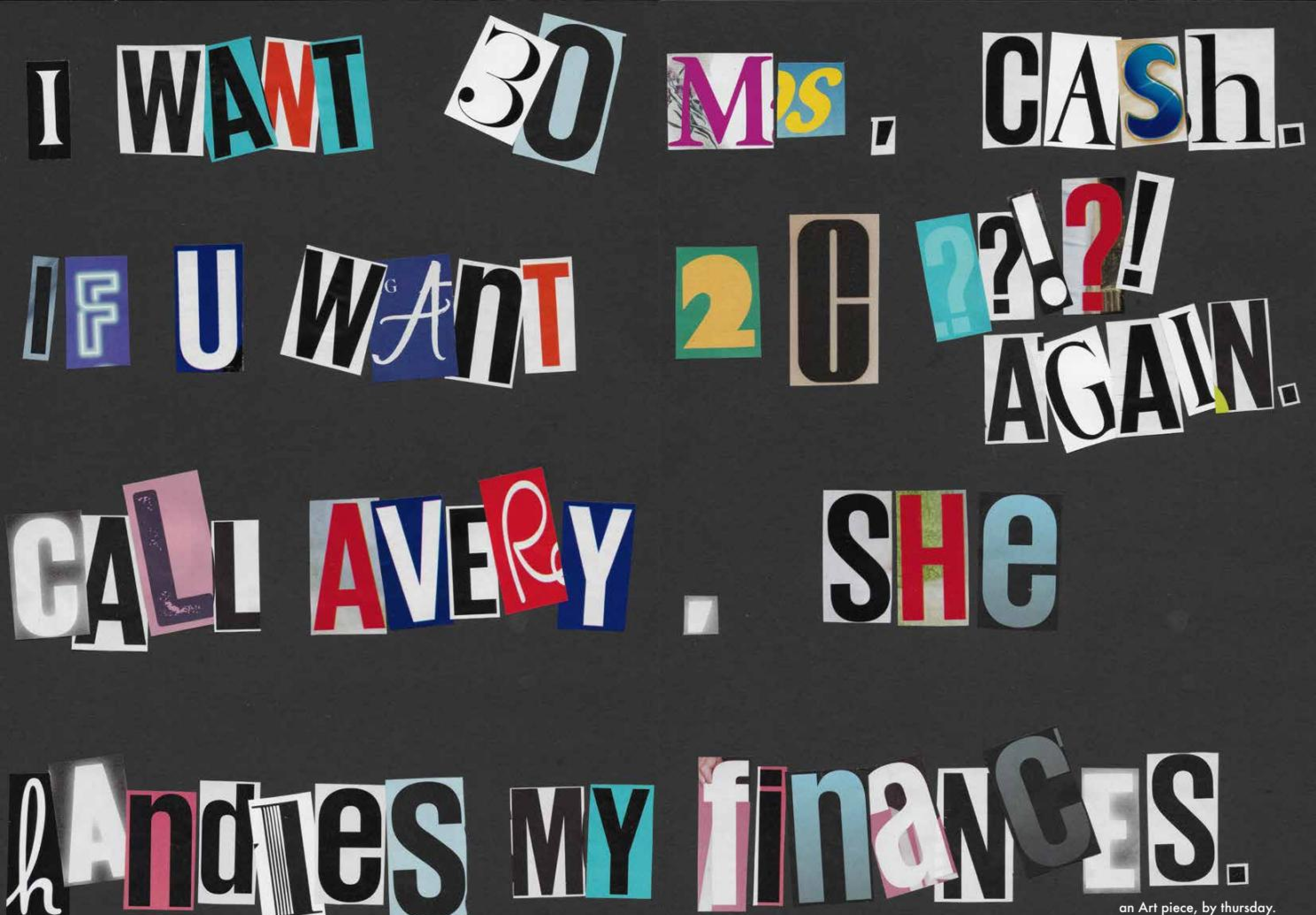
A.



THE TARGET CALLS FORTH THE ARROW

B.

COLLAGES BY PATRICK WAUGH AT BOYOSTUDIO
@PARTICKWAUGH
PHOTOS BY HAZEL GASKIN



an Art piece, by thursday.

STOCKISTS

GET THE CLOTHES FROM THE ISSUE

A

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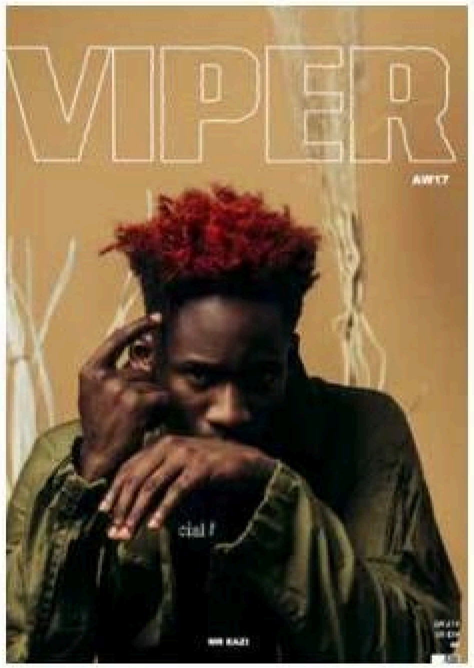
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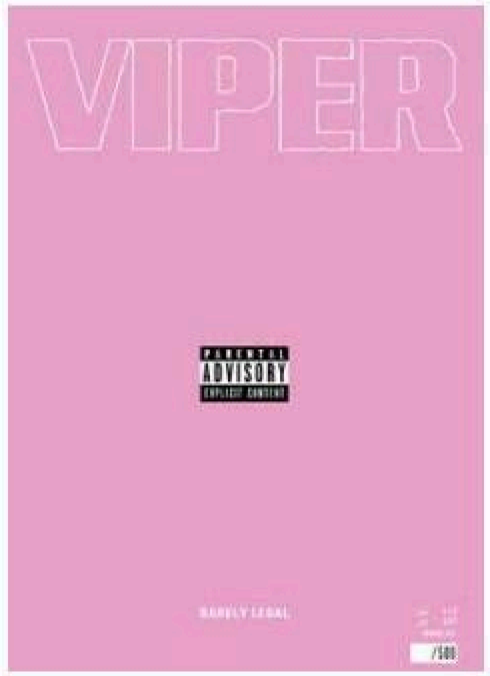
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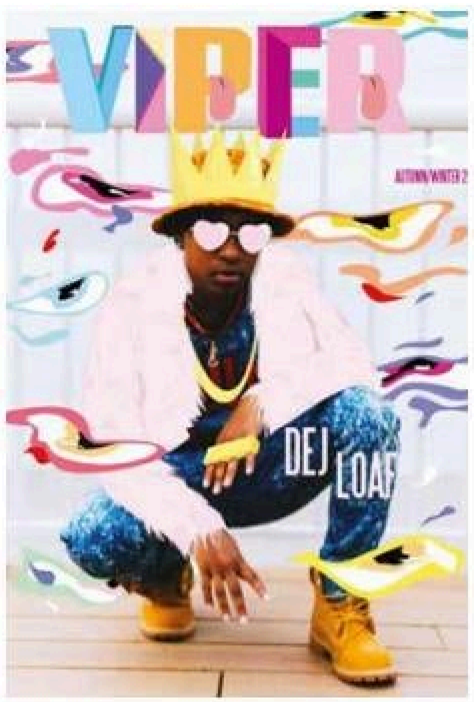
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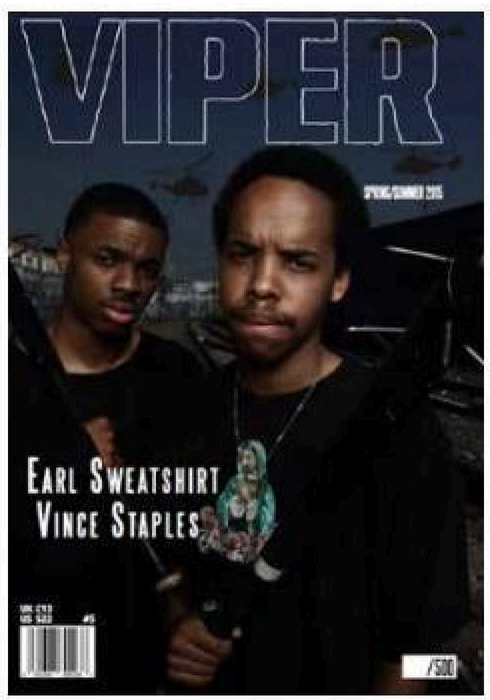
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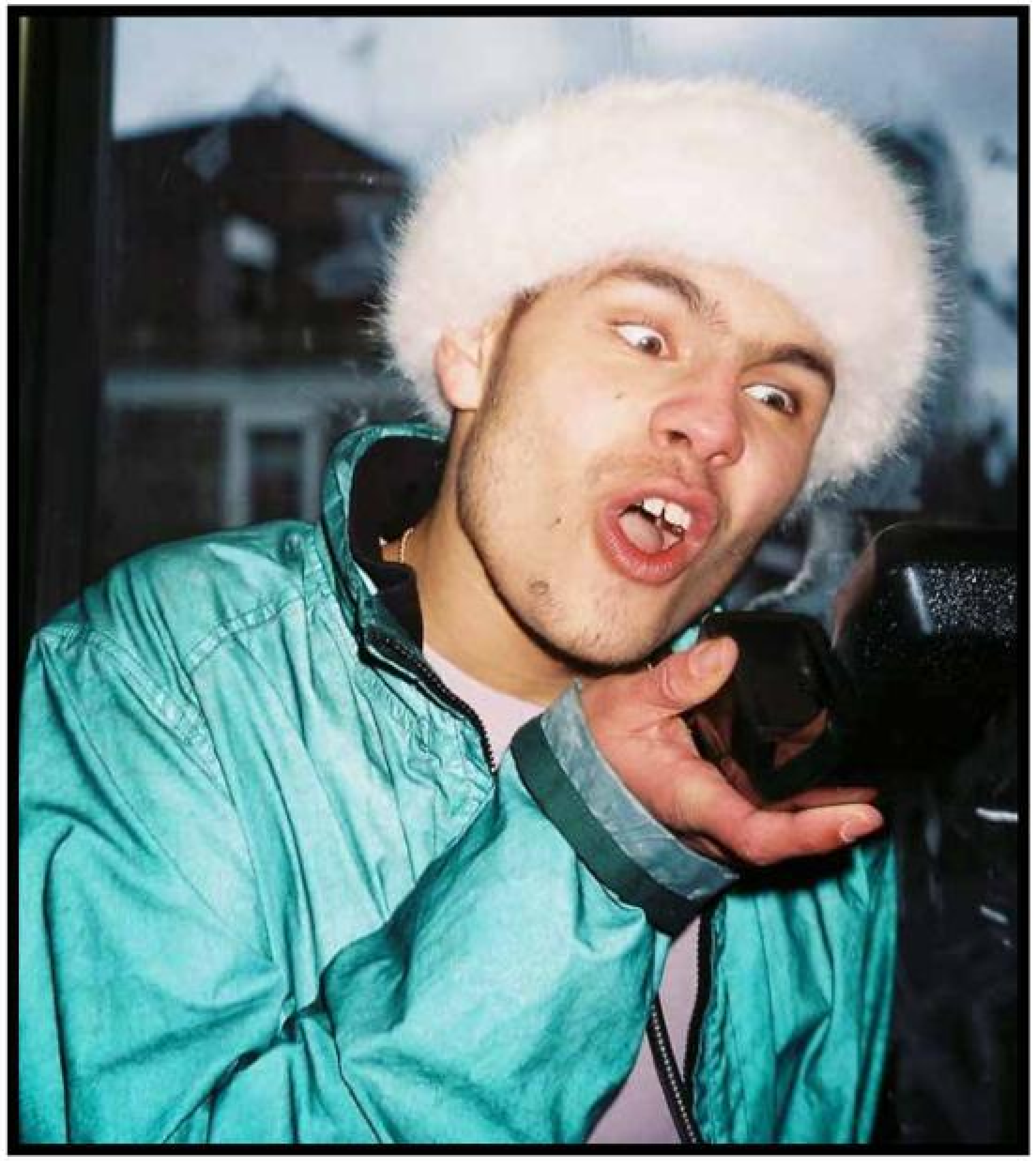


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